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A THOUSAND LIVES

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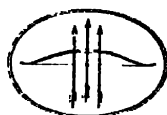


THE PROUD PALADIN
CRY TREASON
WE STOOD FOR FREEDOM
THE MIGHTY YEARS
NOTHING BUT PROPAGANDA
NOT WITHOUT FANTASY
SOVIET BALLET

IRIS MORLEY

A THOUSAND LIVES

*An Account of the
English Revolutionary Movement
1660 – 1685*



ANDRE DEUTSCH

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FOREWORD

This book, imperfect as it is, is the result of many years of research and reflection. The work that went to its composition is not unlike that which a person buying an old and conventional picture gives to its cleaning and restoration. The canvas at first has a not very exciting familiarity, but as bit by bit old varnishes are removed, interesting and some extraordinary things begin to be revealed, till finally an unknown and different picture meets the eye.

The origin, growth and eventual defeat of the New Country Party in the Western Rebellion of 1685 presents a special problem to the investigator. All important English historians have accepted in fundamentals the view of Macaulay. One after another they write of the Party as the stormy parent of the Whigs, wrecked by the personal ambitions of Shaftesbury and of the rebellion as a rising of misguided peasants lured to their death by the handsome face of the Duke of Monmouth. These explanations have never seemed to me adequate or even possible. For instance, the vast majority of agricultural workers, craftsmen and small tradesmen who fought at Sedgemoor had never seen the Duke of Monmouth till they joined the Army. Nor is there any record that he was, at this time, considered particularly handsome or fascinating. On the contrary: he was accepted as a leader for what he represented. So we must ask: What did he represent? What cause, what party, was held so dear that one of the richest and most powerful areas of England rose to arms? This book is an attempt to answer these questions and if anything in it can stimulate the interest of other historians than myself, then it will have been well worth the writing.

I should like to thank in general all those who have helped me in my researches: particularly Mr A. L. Morton whose suggestions and criticisms have been invaluable, and also Mrs St John Irvine, who so kindly devoted much time to guiding me round the West Country itself.

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A CHRONOLOGICAL TABLE OF EVENTS

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The death of William III	March 1702

A THOUSAND LIVES



**'For had I a thousand lives they should
all be engaged in the same cause.'**

***Spoken by Captain Abraham Annesley
from the scaffold at Taunton,
September 1685***

ONE

THE GRAND DESIGN

I

IN 1660, after more than a decade of exile, the royal family were recalled to England and the crown was restored to Charles Stuart.

Twenty years is not a very considerable span of time, but so much had happened in Britain during those years, so many tremendous issues had been debated, fought for, achieved and abandoned; so many revolutionary thoughts had seethed in men's heads; so many irrevocable words had been spoken, that the life of the nation was profoundly different from what it had been before the Civil War. That the majority of Englishmen were disillusioned by the Commonwealth made not the slightest difference to this fundamental fact: the whole structure of society, both economically and politically, was transformed.

The acclamations of joy which greeted the returning Stuarts were thus not a symptom of repentance for the past, but of optimism for a future as yet unformed, but which was bound to be different. And inside this fervour, like the kernel of a nut, was a speculative curiosity about the royal family, who, to most Englishmen, were complete strangers.

Before the first few months were out the universal scourge of smallpox removed the King's eldest sister, the Princess Royal, and his younger brother, the Duke of Gloucester. The Queen Mother, once the formidable Consort of Charles I, who had made herself so feared and so disliked in days gone by, was seen to be merely a plain, elderly, pious Frenchwoman, who had no intention of making her home in England or of resuming her interest in politics. After taking part in the excitements of her son's restoration, she retired to the peace of a French convent. This left upon their native soil the King's younger brother, the Duke of York, who was created Lord High Admiral, and the fifteen-year-old Princess Henriette-

Anne, who had not seen England since she was a few months old. 'The Princess Henriette is very pretty,' wrote Samuel Pepys after a visit to Whitehall, 'but much below my expectations.' And naturally, in the centre of the picture, walking in the royal parks, sitting at the Council table, or bowing from horseback to his loyal subjects, he to whom the crown had been given: *Carolus secundus rex.*

The King was a tall man. He wore a black periwig and dressed in dull colours, grey, black or maroon, that seemed to accentuate his height. He had a loose skin, which at the age of thirty, was falling into a mask of humorous and interesting folds: the ugly face, so a philosopher might think, of a reasonable and enlightened man.

Sometimes court painters, out of desire to flatter their Monarch, omitted the wrinkles, but oddly enough the result was far from flattering, for not only were the signs of age removed, but with them the official version of the affable man, the easy follower of horse races and the lover of pretty women. Instead, the loyal admirer was confronted by that mystical personage the King, to preserve whose person 'imagining, inventing, devising or intending death, harm or restraint', was punishable by hanging, drawing and quartering. Full and hard it stared out of the canvas, as formidable a face as any of its generation.

The fundamental difficulty to which Charles II returned, and which confronted him throughout his reign, lay in the fact that it was not the loyal friends of the monarchy who restored the King to his own in 1660, but its former enemies. The first Parliament of the reign, 'a parliament of lewd young men chosen by a furious people, in spite of the Puritans', was composed of landowners whose glowing loyalty arose from a revulsion against the collapse and decay of the Commonwealth. But, from the beginning, this loyalty was conditionally given to an Anglican sovereign, providing he fulfilled the part that Parliament assigned to him. The members had two main objects in view. One was to suppress the pretensions to power of the smaller trading classes and tenant farmers, who were loyal Presbyterians or Dissenters; the other was to establish their own right to rule the country through the instruments of the Anglican Church and the renovated Monarchy. The seal was set upon the crushing electoral defeat of the Presbyterian party by the

penal laws against Dissenters, known as the Clarendon Code, after the Stuarts' most faithful servant Edward Hyde, now promoted Chancellor. This triumphantly disposed of that portion of the community which offered the only organised opposition to the restored Monarchy, and Parliament could congratulate itself upon being safely in power with the King as its shield and servant; a situation that called forth a flow of royalist sentiment calculated to deceive all but the experienced. In 1664 the French Ambassador observed: 'This government has a monarchical appearance because there is a King, but at bottom it is very far from being a monarchy.' This fact was also silently observed by Charles, and it was one that his upbringing and history could not lead him to approve.

Adversity is commonly supposed to strengthen the ties of blood, and this was never more true than of the Stuarts. After the execution of Charles I, the royal family were reduced to a situation at that time unique in the civilised world, and the two senior representatives, Elizabeth, Queen of Bohemia, and her sister-in-law Queen Henrietta-Maria, were forced to live on the charity of foreign governments. The Queen of Bohemia and her many children found a home in the Netherlands, while Henrietta-Maria lived under humiliating circumstances at the expense of the French Court. The young people thus spent their formative years living from hand to mouth, deprived of all they had reason to expect, so that a superficial observer might have supposed that even a partial recovery of their lost estate was one which would have been looked upon with joyful gratitude. But such a view would have showed a grave misunderstanding of the royal psychology. The last words of their father, spoken upon the scaffold, must have rung in their collective memory with all the solemnity of a funeral bell. 'For the people truly I desire their liberty and freedom as much as anybody whatsoever, but I must tell you their liberty and freedom consists in having government, those laws by which their lives and their goods may be most their own. It is not their having a share in the government; that is nothing appertaining to them. A subject and a sovereign are clean different things.' This thesis would not be thought of by his heir as the mistake which led to his tragic end, but as a declaration of faith which his descendants were obliged to regard as sacred. The King was by no means a hypocrite, but he

possessed, like the Englishman in the Chinese proverb, two faces, one – and it must be emphasised it was perfectly genuine – was easy, affable, sensible. He never made haughty speeches, he liked a witty joke, was reassuringly inattentive to business and showed a ready disposition to let all live beneath their own vine or fig tree. The other face, his private one, was kept for members of the family and those he could implicitly trust, and if it was not precisely the face of an idealist, it was certainly that of a man with a purpose. This purpose might be generally defined as a determination never to be what he, and subsequently his brother, described as a 'Doge of Venice'. For some reason the status of this wealthy and powerful oligarch filled the royal brothers with peculiar horror, and Charles had long decided to resist all attempts to thrust this role upon him. It must not be supposed that it was merely the grosser forms of self-interest that dictated this view; on the contrary, he probably thought that in defending the royal prerogative he was maintaining the ancient constitution of the country and the traditions of the English Crown. He must have perceived from the first the unstable nature of the restoration settlement. The Roman Catholics, the most faithful supporters of the old monarchy, were politically negligible, and the Church of England had received into its arms so many former Presbyterians that the King's reliance upon it must always be tentative. The financial settlement made by the Commons for the Crown was from the first inadequate and it was therefore in the field of foreign policy that Charles displayed most energy. To strengthen his ties with his cousin, the King of France, was his first object, and to this end he arranged a marriage between his sister and Louis's younger brother. The marriage was by no means unpopular; friendship with France had been the policy of the Commonwealth. Little was known of the young King Louis and if the English felt enmity towards any other nation, it was directed rather against the seafaring Dutch, who were ousting them from the Baltic and disputing their supremacy in the Americas and the Indies. Therefore closer ties with France were welcomed, and Parliament voted the Princess a gift of £10,000, while she 'with great affection acknowledged the kindness of the House, excusing herself that she could not do it so well in the English tongue, which she desired to supply with an English heart'; a graceful gesture

which marked the departure of the King's favourite relative from the land of her birth.

II

In March 1661—two months before the Princess's marriage—Cardinal Mazarin had died and Louis XIV personally undertook the task of ruling his kingdom. He was twenty-two years old, and he realised, as he afterwards wrote in his memoirs: 'Love of glory required the same delicacy of touch and of approach as love of a woman.' *Gloire* meant contentment as well as reputation, and France, inhabited by twenty million Frenchmen, was to be transformed into a classical example of monarchy.

The achievement of the great cardinals, Richelieu and Mazarin, who had guided the government of the country for half a century, made this transformation possible. They had succeeded in subjugating the political power of the nobles to the Crown without being forced to share that victory with any other class. That it was a transient victory did not make it less real: for a historical moment it held.

It might seem, on investigation, that the fundamental purpose of an absolute monarchy was a simple one; to maintain a submissive peasantry and so create social conditions in which the feudal lords, assisted by the small but rising middle class, could continue their traditional rule more effectively than had been found possible in the decay of feudalism.

The nobility, who had hitherto ruled each Province like little princes, had been bludgeoned into seeing that their interests could be better served by a strong central power than by the maintenance of separate fiefs. Their independence had been the price asked of them and they had been forced to pay it. In return, the monarchy remained the guarantee of an increasingly efficient exploitation. This was a familiar process in all countries. In England it had happened in the days of the Tudors, though the smallness of the population, the fact that the Crown possessed only trifling coercive powers, and that the wealth of the kingdom was increasingly derived from a mercantilism which flourished as best it could, all set very definite limits on the monarchy. France having ended her feudal wars so much later, the monarchy found itself in possession

of powers of which the Tudors never dreamed. The enormous population provided tax-paying subjects who yielded an annual revenue of about £8,000,000 to the Church. So that at least £16,000,000 a year was wrung out of the French people—for French taxation differed from the English in that it was paid only by the peasantry. Noble and ecclesiastical land was free of the *taille*.

On his assumption of complete power, Louis chose an able civil servant to administer his finances. As with an iceberg, the concealed nine-tenths of Jean-Baptiste Colbert were solidly bourgeois, while the visible tenth was sufficiently noble for the King to employ him. This excellent servant possessed those qualities of industry, thrift, logic and administrative ability which are popularly supposed to be essentially French.

Colbert greatly admired the results of the mercantile enterprise of the Dutch Republic and of England, and conceived the idea of transforming France, hitherto a peasant country, into a producer and exporter of wealth which would make the other two seem like waning stars to the sun. And he would accomplish this efficiently, and quickly because, as France was a real monarchy, the development could be planned and directed from above. He would achieve the same results, indeed infinitely surpass them, but by different and improved means.

The first step was to set the financial house in order. The *taille* was efficiently collected and the state loans were redeemed, so that the royal income became a net one. Capital was then invested in numerous state enterprises; shipyards hummed with activity, industries began to produce luxuries of a quality which any country would find it difficult to rival. The arts and sciences were subsidised, not only from noble and aesthetic motives, but so that the level of technique should be raised by the best creative brains in the kingdom. The Protestants were protected and nourished because of their skill in trades, and tempting offers were made to Dutch technicians to work in French shipyards. In the great innovation of the *manufactures royales*, workers found themselves not producing on their own in haphazard groups, as they did in England, but working in something that resembled a barracks and subject to the strictest discipline. Labour was conscripted not only

for the building of Louis's palaces but also for the royal factories. Strikes were forbidden, as were all associations of workers, and even in private industries and crafts the guild laws became laws in actual fact.

Some thirty-seven years later the great military engineer, Maréchal Vauban, published a book in which he expressed some reflections on economic facts which he had been gathering for many years; consequently one passage in particular might be relevant to the time when Colbert's administration was flourishing. He believed that one-tenth of the French population were beggars, five-tenths on the verge of beggary, three-tenths deeply involved in debt. In the remaining one-tenth he included the clergy, *noblessé*, the legal profession, government officials, and the 'higher mercantile class'. Of these not more than ten thousand families could be considered comfortably off.

The contradictions inherent in this effort to create, through the means of absolutism, the fruits of mercantile capitalism soon made themselves felt. France was still a country of agricultural peasants, and because they were starving, the home market was negligible. The nobility had a rigid contempt for trade, and the merchant classes of the towns did not feel that ebullient strength and freedom which comes from political representation and which seems essential to commercial enterprise.

It must have seemed, almost from the first, that the solution of these difficulties lay in the policy of glorious expansion, and this would naturally have commended itself to the ambitious and industrious monarch.

France was now the predominant European power. The Spanish power was burnt out and its throne occupied by an idiot. This creature was the brother of the Queen of France, and if he died, Louis might, with a few specious excuses, claim all Spain as his wife's dower. More than this; he could claim all the dominions that had ever been held by the Spanish crown. These included the great fiefs of the house of Burgundy, the Spanish Netherlands and the United Provinces themselves. Indeed, that whole empire of Maximilian might be his for the taking, for it did not appear that there was any country capable of opposing these vast designs. The Emperor was engaged in his struggle with the Turkish empire -

French diplomacy could keep this fermenting. The German princes were individually negligible and as a group divided – French money could buy them. Sweden was on the outskirts of Europe, and it was more than possible that England might be gained as an ally. Indeed, this plan of conquest was perfectly feasible, even rational; the folly of the royal philosophy did not lie in the attainment of the ambition, but in its proposed exploitation. Louis would be overlord of Europe, millions of new taxpaying subjects would swell his revenues, and the whole commercial wealth of the Dutch Republic with its fleets and trade would be annexed to the French crown. In fact, all vital differences in production, nationality and religion could be reconciled by the judicious use of dragoons. French hands would milk the rich Amsterdam cow, and a difference in the way it was done would not affect the supply of milk.

It has been said that Colbert distrusted this policy, that he wished France to rival the Dutch Republic, to wrest the great commercial prizes from her by superiority of technique and wealth, and that he distrusted the efficiency of the purely aristocratic weapon of military conquest. Yet the fact remains that his splendid economy was largely an artificial growth; that it had fatal weaknesses for which war would prove at least a temporary remedy.

III

This was the world, by no means fully formed or hardened, yet growing fast, in which the English princess aspired to play a leading part. Throughout the nine years she lived in France, Henriette was her brother's ambassadress, the official holder of that title being merely the post boy. Fortunately, a large part of her correspondence with her brother remains, and from this it is possible to form an idea of the negotiations in which she was engaged.

The second Anglo-Dutch war had begun in 1665, but in spite of English successes at sea, its conduct was mismanaged. The House of Commons sat suspiciously upon the money bags and voted, after long delays, wholly insufficient sums, so that the King and his ministers were unable to prosecute the war with consistency or vigour. It is obvious that this inconclusive sea struggle was by no means unpleasing to the French, who at this stage regarded any English successes as premature. After the disaster of the Medway in



1667 the nation was forced to conclude a peace with the Republic. The relations between Charles and his Parliament were strained: each felt the other to be responsible for the national humiliation.

The retirement of his brother-in-law from the arena of battle was the signal for Louis to initiate the policy of French expansion. In 1667 he formally made the Spanish Claim and sent an army of fifty thousand men to invade and occupy the Spanish Netherlands. Scarcely a musket was fired in opposition. 'The business of a King,' wrote Louis, 'is great, noble and delightful.'

The world had been warned, though not all had the discerning eye of the British representative at the Hague, who wrote of 'this great comet that hath risen of late, the French King, who expects not only to be gazed at but admired by the whole world'. The rulers of the Dutch Republic were not aroused to any keen awareness of their danger. Absorbed in the growth of their civilisation, in the ramifications of trade and banking, the Dutch made no effort to compute their commercial power against the alien forces now on their borders. The most sober of men, they were at the same time the most hypnotised; the industrious substantiality of their Empire forbade any idea that it might vanish like a chimera. Friendship with France had long been the keystone of the State's foreign policy, and while deploring the occupation of the Spanish Netherlands, they were still a considerable distance from the realisation that their traditional ally was now their most dangerous enemy.

In England, however, a great shift was taking place in public feeling. The humiliations of the Dutch war were fading before a new and growing alarm at the French threat to the European *status quo*. The Anglican Parliament fell into what the King termed an 'extravagant' mood, meaning a pro-Dutch one, and, either bowing to or anticipating the wishes of his subjects, he concluded a treaty with Sweden and the Republic for the preservation of peace in Europe.

The sincerity of Charles in negotiating the Triple Alliance is a matter for debate, but it cannot be supposed that, placed as he was, he intended it to endure as a long-term policy. 'I believe you will be a little surprised at the treaty I have concluded with the States,' he wrote to his sister, and subsequently made it clear that the real reason for the Alliance was 'to give some testimony to the world

that we think of our interest here'. Probably this is the crux of the matter. It immensely improved Charles's bargaining power with Louis and allayed the suspicions of his opponents at home. He was almost immediately rewarded. Parliament voted £300,000 for the fleet.

The brilliant success of the almost bloodless War of the Queen's Rights, as the occupation of the Spanish Netherlands was termed, confirmed Louis and his ministers in their belief that the time was ripe for the second part of the plan: the dismemberment of the United Provinces. In order to achieve this, it was necessary to detach England from the Triple Alliance; a piece of diplomacy which, to be completely successful, must be secret. Louis revealed his thoughts to Madame, his sister-in-law. No political circumstances could have coincided more perfectly with her private ambitions, and she threw herself wholeheartedly into the task of concluding a secret treaty between her brother and brother-in-law, which, she believed, would ultimately achieve that dream of all of the surviving children of Henrietta-Maria; the permanent establishment of a family of Roman Catholic monarchs ruling Christendom between them, without interference from national assemblies.

If she paused, pen in hand – for Madame's work now necessitated many hours a day at her correspondence – she saw the world only incidentally divided into countries; the real divisions were between kings and people. 'The King here', being exceptionally powerful, would help Charles to assert himself as a Roman Catholic and impose his will on the English Parliament.

The first step would be to ally himself with 'the King here' in order to destroy the Republic of Holland, Charles retaining some of the ports and colonial territories, and France holding the rest, with the exception of a small part to be under the sovereignty of their nephew, the Prince of Orange. Charles would also promise not to oppose Louis's claims to the Spanish throne, when and if this should fall vacant. In return, Louis would grant Charles subsidies and, if necessary, troops, in order to make possible his independence of Parliament. The result of this bargain would be that Louis would control Europe, while Charles nibbled at the fringes and grew rich at sea.

There were dangers, of course – Louis was building a fleet and

it could not be doubted that his ultimate object was to make France a commercial rival of England. There is, indeed, something rather poignant in Charles's realisation that the British fleet was the only real card he held against his royal ally's pack of aces, though possibly it would have surprised the English seamen to know that they represented their master's only hope of ever obtaining an income, except from a French subsidy. The moment they were outclassed by the French, the King's position became that of a prince of the blood, owning Louis as his overlord. However, as Madame pointed out in a very remarkable document, this was a risk that must be taken.

In the autumn of '69 she composed a memorandum for her brother, who six months before, being 'then in his full vigours and strength', had given his agreement in principle.

Following the promise I made to you to let you know my opinion and what I have been able to see in this important business I will tell you that the order into which the King [Louis] has put his finances in has greatly increased his power and has put him more than ever in a position to make attacks on his neighbours, but so long as England and Holland are united they have nothing to fear from that quarter, and they can even protect their neighbours as they have been seen to do at the time of the last war in Flanders, when they became allied because they were indirectly interested in the preservation of that country. It is not surprising then that the majority of people who do not know the inside of things judge that the safest part you can play would be not to enter into any alliance against Holland. But the matter takes on a different aspect, firstly because you have need of France to ensure the success of the design about R. [Rome] and there is very little likelihood of your obtaining what you desire from the King except on condition that you enter into a league with him against Holland. I think you must take this resolution, and when you have thought it well over you will find that besides the intention of R. your glory and your profit will coincide with this design. Indeed what is there more glorious and more profitable than to extend the confines of your kingdom beyond the sea and to become supreme in commerce, which

is what your people most passionately desire and what will probably never occur so long as the Republic of Holland exists?

This passage alone would prove Madame a statesman. Charles's interests as King and Catholic run counter to those which might be supposed to be Britain's. Madame admits this with disarming frankness, then neatly turns the whole thing round and shows Charles how to eat his cake and still have it.

The letter then breaks up into various arguments and counter-arguments, which may be summarised as follows:

(1) It is true that the ruin of Holland will make Louis very great and that he aspires to rule in commerce as well. *Counter-argument:* However, English ships and scamen are superior to French, and the captured Dutch towns can be run purely for English profit.

(2) It is possible that Louis, after victory, may try to cheat Charles out of his agreed share. *Counter argument:* But Charles can hold the Dutch ports 'with ease', and Louis's territorial expansion will frighten the Flemish and Germans, as well as Spain, and they would combine to secure England in her conquests.

(3) It might be that Parliament will not be 'agreeable' to voting money for the war. *Counter argument:* But Louis will pay something in advance and Parliament will soon see that 'the security of the Kingdom is at stake'.

Madame can see two jumps ahead as well as anybody, but she has little idea of the relative strength of the forces concerned, for even the best statesmen are handicapped if they are also princesses and spend their whole lives shut up in palaces and parks. Chessmen on a board are more real to Madame than the Flemings, Germans and Spanish, who in a few moves can conveniently cry 'Check' to Louis.

Up to now I have only spoken of your interest joined to that of your kingdom; but it is easy to see that the execution of the design which is being proposed to you, would be the veritable foundation of your own greatness, because, having a pretext for keeping up troops outside your kingdom to protect your conquests, the thought alone of these troops, which for greater safety could be composed of foreigners and would be practically in sight of England, could keep it in check and render Parliament more amenable than it has been accustomed to be.

What is interesting in this correspondence,* is the absolutely pitiless attitude revealed towards Holland. The country was to be entirely dismembered; French dragoons were to enforce submission on its citizens, and its ports were to be run for English profit. That this would bring intense suffering to almost every inhabitant of the country, does not even faintly disturb Charles or his sister. Indeed, their letters reveal that inveterate hatred which can only spring from an ideological source: a Protestant republic exists only to be blotted out.

During the winter the last letters were being written, the last Ambassadors humming to and fro across the Channel. The cyphers and the precautions were more elaborate than ever. It was decided after many difficulties and delays that Madame herself should go to England to conclude the matter.

She landed in Kent at the end of May in fine weather. All the Court had come down from London and country people pushed through the cottage gardens to watch this meeting of their monarch with the fine French lady, his sister. That they had an extraordinary affection for each other was obvious. Enclosed in their private happiness, they seemed withdrawn from the bells ringing in their honour, from the compliments of other people. Madame, whose health had recently given rise to great anxiety, had all the amazing resilience of her family, and from the moment when her foot trod the Dover cliffs, all signs of ill health vanished in a bloom suitable to her twenty-five years. She, too, was in her 'full vigour and strength'.

For her it was more than a question of temporary happiness; her whole future was now being built upon her brother's love, a fact which her other brother the Duke of York, always jealous of his position, quickly realised. Years afterwards he recorded his opinion that she had intended to come to England 'and rule all'. However, an excuse was found to send him away from Dover; not so that the Treaty could be signed without him – he knew all about that – but so that the King and Henriette could be alone together. In this, as in other things, Charles always considered his brother's susceptibilities; for instance, in the beginning of the *grand design* he told him that it was necessary to bring their sister into the secret because of her relationship to Louis. At the same time, he was

telling her that it would be necessary to confide the scheme to York. The habit of playing one person off against another is not easily dropped.

The visit to Dover was drawn out to ten days; possibly the best days of their lives. It is to be wondered if she ever considered what she was planning to bring to the crowds who thronged the streets, to the good citizens of Canterbury who lit bonfires in her honour. To her they were simply subjects; their faces and lives as undifferentiated as those of cattle in the fields. But though they appeared pacific it nevertheless sometimes happened that they became inflamed by 'unquiet spirits', and it was against these busy persons that she was making her plans. Of English ministers, only Arlington and Clifford had been considered sufficiently reliable to be made privy to the affair, and their signatures now stood against Colbert de Croissy's on the precious document. Later on it would be necessary for some sort of *traite simulé* to be arranged which would include the opening moves of the attack on the Netherlands, and in this the anti-Dutch proclivities of Buckingham and Ashley would assure that they each played a leading part. In this way, without in the least knowing it, they would become involved in the Roman Catholic part, discreetly hidden by the letter 'R'.

But the 'holiday' was over at last, and to the boom of French guns Madame sailed victoriously back to Louis and Versailles.

When she gave Louis that document she became the most important woman in France. She had won all that lay upon the board. Let her husband indulge his humours and whisk her from château to château, she could feel some of the serenity of contempt. All the preliminaries of her plan were achieved.

And then, precipitately, on that hot Sunday as she lay asleep upon some cushions, there came a change.

She awoke when some visitors came and chatted to them as usual, then called for chicory water. At the first draught she went red with agony. 'I have been poisoned!' She had probably had a gastric ulcer for a long while, and after she had eaten dinner it burst. From the first there was no hope and after a few hours of agony, her life was ended.

By one of those curious chances to which the future gives the

look of fate, the news of her death was brought to Charles by Sir Thomas Armstrong, a man whom he had known for many years, and who had been a companion in the old days when he was an exile in the Netherlands.

Armstrong believed Madame to have been poisoned and told the King so. For a few moments Charles lost his self-control and raged against the imagined poisoners, then recollecting himself said, 'I beg you, Sir Thomas, do not say a word of this.' No word ever passed his own lips. Painful as it was, necessity in the form of the royal interests demanded that his sister's sacrifice must be ignored.

Her departure left Charles pledged to the most ambitious project ever consciously undertaken by an English sovereign. The details were carefully planned and well organised and the opening moves passed off successfully.

The official foreign policy of Britain was still that of the Triple Alliance. Outwardly all the suitable forms were observed, but as the King had calculated, a substantial number of his ministers now urged him to enter into a secret agreement with the French for an attack on the Republic. Obliging he sent Buckingham off to France and the *tratte simulé* was signed. Of Madame's treaty, the secret within a secret, no one knew anything except his brother, Lord Arlington, Clifford, Lord Arundel and one of the Queen's private secretaries.

It was essential to the whole scheme that the war on the Dutch and the dismemberment of the Republic should come first and should be complete. It was also essential that England's share of the spoils should be substantial, for only if the country was generally pleased with the course of events was there a reasonable chance of fulfilling the crucial religious clause, which, it was hoped, would decisively change the national destiny and transform England into a true monarchy.

The ports were repaired and garrisoned by trustworthy men, money and the most anxious care was lavished on the navy – both Charles and his brother were competent when it came to ships – and strong Protestants such as Ormond, the Viceroy of Ireland, were shifted to other and less responsible posts.

TWO

A LESSON IN TACTICS

IN ORDER to discover the true nature of the diplomatic reverses which were now to face the King of England, it is necessary to turn from the glittering panorama of court diplomacy and burrow into the homely greenery of the English countryside, where, uninterrupted by Commonwealth or Restoration, the squirarchy were labouring like autumnal squirrels at capital accumulation. Among these industrious gentlefolk was one family, singled out by destiny to provide a representative and a champion of their class.

For five or six hundred years, the Coopers had lived a modest manorial life, sheltered by oak and ash and thick yellow clusters of Hampshire broom. Nothing eventful happened to them till the break up of the church estates during the Reformation when, acquiring some of these lands, they entered on a new era of prosperity. A matrimonial alliance with a similar family, the Ashleys of Dorset, increased their modest affluence and the seal of the *nouveau-riche*, two baronetcies purchased from James I at a thousand pounds a piece, stamped their success. The child, born in the summer of 1621 and christened Anthony Ashley, was thus 'of a considerable family; heir to a fortune above contemptible; but with an aspiring mind, by much too high flown for his quality and estate'.

The fortune was now estimated at over £8,000 a year, and as for his aspiring mind, it was, in spite of a censorious biographer, not peculiar but symptomatic of his class.

Orphy. I at an early age, he was not inexperienced in the ways of the world. At thirteen he had instituted a law suit for the recovery of some property fraudulently squandered by an uncle. His guardians, determined to educate him in a style worthy of his fortune, decided upon Oxford. He became a student at Exeter

College, which was frequented by gentlemen and scholars from the West Country and presided over by Dr Prideaux, a member of a powerful and Puritan Somerset family. Anthony was now sixteen years old, tiny and blonde, with flaxen hair, 'inclined to brown, soft and turning at the ends', a long, perspicacious nose and chin, curling lips and luminous eyes.

He did not, of course, attend the University in order to become a scholar. As he says: 'I kept both horses and servants in Oxford and was allowed what expense or recreation I desired, which liberty I never much abused; but it gave me the opportunity of obliging by entertainment the better sort and supporting divers of the activest of the lower rank with giving them leave to eat when in distress upon my expense, it being no small honour amongst those sort of men that my name in the buttery book willingly owed twice the expense of any in the University. This expense my quality, proficiency in learning and natural affability easily not only obtained the goodwill of the wiser and older sort, but made me the leader of the rough young men.'

It is plain that false modesty does not obscure this passage or, indeed, any other that he ever wrote, but at least the boast has a frank air and does not conceal depths of corroding self-esteem.

The Oxford career of Ashley is of peculiar interest for it is, in miniature, an almost complete illustration of the political alignments, even the tactics, of his great campaigns more than thirty years later.

In these days there was the custom of 'coursing' between rival colleges. 'This coursing was in olden times, I believe, intended for a fair trial of learning and skill in logic, metaphysics and school divinity, but for some ages that had been the least part of it, the dispute quickly ending in affronts, confusion and very often blows, when they went most gravely to work. . . . I was often one of the disputants, and gave the sign and order for their beginning, but being not strong of body was always guarded from violence by two or three of the sturdiest youths as their chief and one who always relieved them when they were in prison and procured their release, and very often was forced to pay the neighbouring farmers when they of our party that wanted money were taken in the field for

more geese, turkeys and poultry than either they had stole or he had lost. . . .

Already at sixteen, 'our party' meant the poor gentlemen 'famous for courage and strength . . . tall, rawboned Cornish and Devonshire gentlemen'. He never writes of them but we feel the warmth of his admiration, as if indeed he were irresistibly drawn to the wild, the under-privileged, the strong. During the whole course of his life Ashley loved tall, strong men and from his earliest years he associated this physical perfection with the gentry and yeomanry of his native West Country.

Once this alliance was formed between wealth and audacity on one hand and unorganised and rebellious strength on the other, Ashley set himself with considerable daring to accomplish a small revolution. This revolution concerned the overthrowing of another college custom as brutal as it was unbreakable. This was 'tucking'. 'A foolish custom of great antiquity that one of the seniors in the evening called the freshmen to the fire, and made them hold out their chin, and they with the nail of their right thumb, left long for that purpose, grate off all the skin from the lip to the chin and then cause them to drink a beerglass of water and salt.'

Apparently year after year the students submitted to this treatment, probably out of the blind obedience to convention which can so easily be imposed on adolescents. Anthony determined to resist, though martyrdom was foreign to his nature and a lonely and heroic defiance was by no means his plan. Instead, 'I considered that it had happened in that year, more and lustier young gentlemen had come to the college than had done in several years before, so that the freshmen were a very strong body. Upon this I consulted my two cousin-germans, both freshmen, both stout and very strong, and several others, and at last the whole party were cheerfully engaged to stand stoutly to defence of their chins. We all appeared at the fires in the hall and my Lord Pembroke's son calling me first, as we knew by custom it would begin with me, I according to agreement, gave the signal striking him a box on the ear, and immediately the freshmen fell on and we easily cleared the buttery and the hall; but bachelors and young masters coming in to assist the seniors we were compelled to retreat to a ground-chamber in the quadrangle. They pressing at the door, some of the

stoutest and strongest of our freshmen, giant-like boys opened the doors, let in as many as they pleased, and shut the door by main strength against the rest; those let in they fell upon and had beaten very severely but that my authority with them stopped them, some of them being considerable enough to make terms for us, which they did, for Dr Prideaux being called out to suppress the mutiny, the old Doctor, always favourable to youth offending out of courage, wishing with the fears of those we had within, gave us articles of pardon for what had passed, and an utter abolition in that college of that foolish custom'

In fact, he could claim a complete and formidable success, for either through instinct or upon due reflection, he had initiated that practice which was to be the guiding maxim of his life—on determining to resist, organise. The capacity to perceive that the personal, individual revolt against injustice, tyranny or other evils, could only be brought to a successful conclusion by identifying it with the resistance of a class (in this case that of the freshmen) is the most distinctive trait of Ashley's character. In an age when most men sought to achieve their ambitions through intrigue, he set out to attain his through organisation, not by isolating his own affairs, but because he saw that he could play his own game more effectively if it were also that of others.

There is no means of knowing how his rebellion affected his popularity with the students, whether he was regarded as the seventeenth century equivalent of a bouncer and cad, or as something of a hero. Among 'our party', at least, he must have been liked and trusted, otherwise they would not have listened to him at that intoxicating moment when in the cellar room they were belabouring the seniors, who were 'considerable enough to make terms for us'.

The affair increased the already considerable self-confidence of the young man. It proved the world could be managed, could, in fact, be made to yield results, stupidity and tyranny could be overcome if judiciously attacked. No doubt he was stimulated by pleasant reflections when he left Oxford and returned to take his place in the county.

In these days Hampshire and Dorset were considered to be in that great group of rich counties known as 'The West'. This was

the most civilised and developed part of England, divided into shares, not grossly unequal, between squires and yeomen. Every few miles good stone and brick houses showed between oak and beech, and for mile on mile the pasture rolled in rich beauty. The coast had flourishing ports, the cities of the deep west housed the great capitalists of the clothing trade, and the mines and quarries were at their height of production. This was the weald of England's wealth and it must have been no little thing to be lord of some of these fine manors at the age of twenty.

Years afterwards, while in prison, Ashley described something of this society, and in these lively passages it is impossible not to feel a nostalgia for a past, which like some lustrous mirage of summer, sends its shimmering impressions down through the memory, illuminating many an incident, many a forgotten tenderness.

For instance, there was the weekly bowling match at Hanley, near Wimbourne St Giles. Here came the gentlemen who were not Puritans, chief among them the astonishing Mr Hastings, a figure so picturesque that he left an indelible flourish on a lifetime's recollection.

He was [says Ashley, enjoying himself] an original in our age or rather the copy of our nobility in ancient days . . . he was low, very strong and very active, of a reddish flaxen hair; his clothes always green cloth and never all worth when new five pounds. . . . He kept all manner of sport-hounds that ran buck, fox, hare, otter and badger, and hawks long and short winged . . . and indeed all his neighbours grounds and royalties were free to him, who bestowed all his time in such sports but what he borrowed to caress his neighbours wives and daughters, there being not a woman in all his walks of the degree of a yeoman's wife or under, and under the age of forty, but it were extremely her fault if he were not intimately acquainted with her. This made him very popular, always speaking kindly to the husband, brother or father who was to boot very welcome to his house whenever he came.

And what a house! To the gay and inquisitive Ashley it contained many curiosities that he remembered for ever. The great hall hung with fox skins and strewed with marrow bones, where,

'on a great hearth paved with brick lay some terriers and the choicest hounds and spaniels, seldom but two of the great chairs had litters of young cats in them, which were not to be disturbed, he having always three or four attending him at dinner, and a little white round stick of fourteen inches long, lying by his trencher, that he might defend such meats he had no mind to part with to them'

There was the *Bible* and the *Book of Martyrs*, dice, cards, old hats containing pheasants' eggs, an oyster table, which was of constant use twice a day all the year round, for he never failed to eat oysters before dinner and supper though all the seasons'

In an adjoining chapel there was a shrine of beef in the pulpit and a vigorous voice singing, 'There lies a pudding in the fire, and my put lies therein'. Resmays insisted the 'ice' and syrup of gillyflower finds its delicious way into the shield. He was well-natured, but soon angrily called his servants bastards and cuckoldy knaves, in one of which he often spoke truth to his own knowledge and sometimes in both though of the same man.

It is interesting to note that at this time (1750) Mr Hastings was a type of squint already rare in the south, though there were still many like him in the more rural north. In comparison with him, the other gentry are as pile as tilow candles held to an outflame. True, there was Sir Walter Farfax who had been a Low Country soldier, and whose garden was cut into redoubts and works representing the sieges he had been at. But most of them were merely 'of the best estates in the county, one or two of conduct who had much worsted his estate, and here very considerable both for estate and family, a wise, crafty, experienced man but extremely narrow in expenses, a great enemy of the Puritans'. On the other hand, there were those like the Frenchards of a very noble family and good estate, a very honest, well-natured worthy man, a favourer of the Puritans'. Then there were those weaker spirits who neither favoured nor fought the Puritans, who as it were, seemed to seek separation from their estates by a deplorable attitude of *laissez-faire*. 'Mr John Tregonwell enjoyed his nightcaps, his poached eggs, his chamber pleasures, and thought no further of the world. Mr Thomas Tregonwell was perfectly his father's son.'

His estate was the principal part of a man. His basic hypothesis

was accepted by the young Ashley as unquestionable, and indeed full of lively and delightful possibilities. The quest of a rich orphan for a powerful father-in-law is as interesting as that of an Arthurian Knight for the Grail, for his whole career must turn upon it. Should he marry Rogers's half-sister? Mr Rogers kept a coach-and-six and cut a very great figure at the bowling green, but the lady most inconveniently had brothers. Dr Olivian, possibly something of an astrologist, foretold she would nevertheless be a great fortune, but Uncle Tooker advised against it. Anthony needed political influence more than a fortune, and he finally managed to select for a natural protector the Lord Keeper of the Seal, Lord Coventry.

However, the paramount importance of the father-in-law did not render the bride negligible. Even the greatest personages sometimes had handsome daughters and for a young man so gay and insinuating, so eager to succeed, to be in love was much pleasanter than being out of it. 'Kisses,' he wrote enviously, when his own lips were chilled with age, 'the constant trade twixt young men and women.' And we follow that invaluable body servant, Mr Pyne (the younger brother of a good family) upstairs into the women's chambers, where his great skill in cutting out bodices and gowns, and possibly other less public garments, wins him the warmest praise. Besides, he is so disarming that all the feminine secrets find their way into his master's keeping, and that evening at fortune telling, there is much confusion and blushing as the flirtatious palmist produces nice extracts. And somewhere in these pleasant gardens and chambers, possibly putting clove cunnions into the wine casks or gathering woodruffe for the linen, is the 'lovely, beautiful fair woman', distinguished among her sisters, who is to be his bride.

She was, he wrote on the day of her death eight years later, 'of admirable wit and wisdom, beyond any I ever knew. . . . She was in discourse and counsel far beyond any woman'.

This unfortunate young woman was not formed by nature for child-bearing. One disastrous pregnancy after another pushed her towards the grave and the fourth killed her. Her husband lamented her; but within a year the widower became a bridegroom. Men of estate must have heirs. This was one of the inescapable facts of an existence in which one was hanged for stealing or whipped for

being a pauper. In the shadows of many a bridal chamber the funeral plumes gathered before a year was out or the epithalamiums forgotten.

Thus I have set down my youthful time. What follows is a time of business which overtook me early, and the rest of my life is not without great mixtures of the public concern, and must be much intermingled with the history of the times.

In 1641 Charles I summoned Parliament after eleven years. The election of Ashley to this House of Commons, like the incidents at Oxford, has the ring of an incident true to his essential nature.

On the occasion of a hunting trip at Tewkesbury he, and some of the other gentlemen, were invited to dinner by the bailiffs or chief citizens of the town. At the banquet a proud Papist gentleman 'began the dinner with all the affronts and dislikes he could put on the Bailiffs or their entertainment, which enraged and discountenanced them and the rest of the town that stood behind us; and the more, it being in the face of the best gentlemen of the country, and when they resolved to appear in their best colours'.

Ashley sympathised with the bailiffs, possibly without deliberation; the natural affinity he felt with citizens got the better of him and he answered the hectoring Sir Harry with 'the bitterest retorts' and had 'a perfect victory over him'.

This [he says with his usual modesty] gained me the townsmen's hearts and their wives to boot; I was made free of the town, and the next Parliament, though absent, without a penny charge, was chosen Burgess by an unanimous vote.

A truly enviable way of being elected, and one which no doubt did not endear him to 'the best gentlemen of the county'. So the small, audacious craft, silver-coloured and trimly rigged, was launched upon those swift shoals which soon ran to deep and thunderous waters. The powerful father-in-law was dead, the rival writs of King and Parliament were blowing in every man's face.

When the King raised his standard at Nottingham, Ashley was present, 'but as a spectator'; and a spectator he apparently managed to remain till 1643.

The crucial question had yet to be answered: What was a man of the best estate to do? Dorset was mostly for Parliament, but had Parliament a real chance of winning the struggle? After some negotiations through a patron, the Marquis of Hertford, during which no one seemed to quite know who Sir A. A. Cooper was, he managed to be appointed by the King to the governorship of Weymouth. Shortly afterwards he left this post, quitted the Royalists and went over to Parliament.

The Royalists said he did this out of pique because the King decided to relieve him of his governorship; he said he did it for conscience's sake and that his change of side, in fact, meant the sacrifice of over £3,000 a year drawn from properties in the King's territories.

Which version is the true one will never be positively determined. As he would have said himself, being particularly fond of the writings of Sir Walter Raleigh, another ambitious and realistic man, 'whosoever shall follow truth too near the heels it may haply strike out his teeth'.

It can safely be said that Ashley was born with a constitutional incapacity to reverence tradition, and that the crown of England, like the long nail of Lord Pembroke's son, would be regarded by him strictly from the point of view of rational usefulness. Not idealistic or much given to abstract thought, his native sympathies seem to have been genuinely with citizens and moderate Puritans. As a Justice of the Peace he tried to mitigate the sentences of criminals and his relations with his social inferiors were always warm and good. A judicious mingling of interest and inclination probably accounted for his final decision in favour of the Parliament. He would realise that there were too many great nobles about the King for him to achieve a place to suit his ambition; and then he was no Hyde, no 'loyal, good servant', to serve on for the sake of service.

On Parliament's side, however, all was opportunity. Just as he had won a foremost place in the county, so he would in the national assembly. In a very real way this was simply an extension of the life in which he was experienced.

Although it would not be strictly true to say the next ten years were uneventful, in so far as any man's career could be one of

steady, if unspectacular, progress through the raging gusts of civil war, Ashley's was. He became an able soldier; one whose presence of mind brought off victory and inspired confidence. He belonged, on the whole, to the Presbyterian party, though later he moved firmly in Cromwell's direction. Indeed, he came to occupy a high place in Oliver's regard and what might be described as the apogee of his Commonwealth career was reached in the early days of the Protectorate. Unfortunately no record remains of his opinions on the burning questions of the day: the execution of the King or the crushing of the Levellers. However, we may presume that a steadily growing agnosticism carried him past the whirlpools of scruple and the solid reality of his estate secured him from being won by inconvenient argument.

It is not to be expected that any prominently placed politician of these days would escape censure. During the years of the Protectorate and the subsequent collapse of the Commonwealth, he was frequently criticised for 'catting', for the slippery but successful drop on to the right side.

Most of these charges are of a general rather than a particular nature; that he wanted to marry Cromwell's daughter, that he was 'a man of a healing and reconciling spirit of all interests that agree in the greatening of himself'. It is possible that the notable lack of mysticism in his character, allied to ability and ambition, seemed dangerous to men of strong religious conviction; and then there is the question of his 'insinuating manners', of that dubious something which made Charles II nickname him 'Little Sincerity'.

He describes it himself, as 'my affable, easy temper, now with care improved'. One suspects that this improvement was an error, honesty more commonly being supposed to be the prerogative of the disagreeable. Be that as it may, his political life at this period is one of stability. He belonged to a centre party; to the city Presbyterians, who, though they would support Cromwell in suppressing the Levellers, were for the absolute authority of a House of Commons against the rule of Protector and generals. He was an enemy of the right wing General Lambert and his friends, and he fought the idea of reinstituting the House of Lords. What he envisaged was a commonwealth or republic ruled by a House of Commons composed of enlightened property owners. As he put it

in a speech of this period: 'Englishmen's minds are free and better taught in their liberties now than ever. A Parliament cannot enslave the people.'

When it became apparent, however, that events were not inclining in this direction, he carried himself with a possibly unpleasant prudence. It might be charged that he had neither the quality nor the stupidity of those, who like old Romans, chose death or exile rather than come to terms with a detestable future. On the other hand, no sensible man can be required fatally to involve himself in what he regards as the ignominious collapse of an already ruined government.

Years afterwards he wrote an account of his opinions at this time in the draft of a letter to Charles II. He begins by declaring that as the King knows, he was never engaged in Royalist plots, correspondence or any traitorous dealings. He continues: 'I saw the hand of Providence that had led us through various forms of government, and had given power into the hands of several sorts of men; but He had given none of them a heart to use it as they should. They all fell to the prey, sought not the good or settlement of the nation, endeavoured only the enlargements and continuance of their own authority and grasped at those very powers they had complained of so much, and for which so bloody and fatal a war had been raised and continued in the bowels of the nation. I observed the leaders of the great parties of religion, both laity and clergy, ready and forward to deliver up the rights and liberties of the people, and to introduce an absolute dominion, so that the tyranny might be established in the hands of those that favoured their way, and with whom they might have hopes to divide the present spoil, having no eye to posterity, or thoughts of future things.'

This was probably his genuine opinion, and with others of his class and mind, he determined to see what a controlled monarchy would do for the 'rights and liberties' of the people, and incidentally of substantial property owners.

THREE

THE ATHEIST EARL

I

1660 was the year that began in May. In the four months that lay between the end of 1659 and the King's Restoration, a whole era seemed to have tumbled into oblivion, and a new one been created. A decisive change in the nation's way of life had become apparent.

Unlike the French King, who could command twenty million subjects, Charles II could count only upon the divided loyalty of less than five. It has been estimated that the inhabitants of England and Wales numbered some four and a half million. About half of these, of whom the bulk were agricultural labourers, worked for wages.

In the sixteen-eighties Gregory King drew up some statistics of the average income of the two and a quarter million who were not wage earners. His list is as follows:

Average income of noblemen			£ 3,200 per annum		
"	"	" spiritual peer	£ 1,300	"	"
"	"	" baronet	£ 850	"	"
"	"	" knight	£ 650	"	"
"	"	" esquire	£ 450	"	"
"	"	" country gentleman	£ 280	"	"
"	"	" merchants and traders	£ 400 to £ 200	"	"
"	"	" farmers (yeoman and tenant)	£ 55 to £ 42	"	"
"	"	" senior clergy	£ 72	"	"
"	"	" inferior clergy	£ 50	"	"
"	"	" lawyers	£ 154	"	"
"	"	" arts and sciences	£ 60	"	"
"	"	" naval and military officers	£ 80 to £ 60	"	"

How accurate these figures are it is impossible to say, and if we are to apply them to a decade or two earlier they must be considered only as approximate. Of course, there were noblemen and baronets whose income was as high as £10,000, £20,000 or even more per annum, and also London merchants whose fortunes were enormous. Lawyers, artists, scientists, naval and military officers were only a negligible proportion of the community and the bulk of this middle income group in the country were the yeomen and tenant farmers, and in the towns, the small trader.

The social relations of this two and a quarter million to the other two and a quarter million – labourers, artisans and craftsmen who either worked directly for a weekly wage or, as weavers did, at ‘piece rates’, were clearly defined in the interests of the former.

During the Commonwealth labour had acquired mobility and promising lads migrated to districts and industries where they could better themselves. Many new towns began to develop in this way and colonies of landless men could be seen, as for instance at Birmingham, hammering nails and living in barbarous noise and freedom. At the Restoration settlement, however, all country land-owners, no matter what their political affiliations, decided to put a speedy end to this heyday of economic freedom. No more should labourers, miners, weavers and other workers wander independently about the countryside bargaining for their services. Though, in the long run, the Act of Parochial Settlement was unable effectively to stop what had become a symptom of social change, it did act as a decisive check for a decade or so.

This Act was extremely ingenious and showed the shrewd and cunning mind of the English landlord at its best. To begin with, it was enacted for ‘the good of the poor’. French landlords, who still had the grandiose but unprofitable right to warm their feet on the entrails of a newly killed serf, might have learnt a lesson or two in tactful management from their English brethren.

It was for the good of the poor, which meant any person who occupied a dwelling costing less than £10 per annum, that if they left their native parish they should be forcibly returned to it by the justices and churchwardens of the new locality. In fact, below a certain income level, the peasants were still serfs, tied to the soil. A sense of security returned to the countryside, wages fell, and

though, subsequently they rose, they never caught up with advancing prices.

Although the agricultural labourer was considered the lowest class of the community, the artisan was scarcely better off and in some trades worked longer hours for less money. This was particularly true of the weavers in the West, where the great wool industry was already far advanced in capitalist development. The trade was in the hands of the clothiers – capitalist *entrepreneurs* who sometimes employed as many as a thousand people and might be worth anything from ten to forty thousand pounds. The weavers either owned their looms or rented them, and were under contract to the clothiers who paid them at piece rates. When trade was poor they would not earn more than 6d a day, and the spinners, who were women and children, not more than 2d. In weaving, as in mining, seasons of unemployment were by no means unknown and then the plight of the workers was desperate.

This drive to enforce submission upon the peasantry was strengthened by a simultaneous theological onslaught on Dissent. The study of mathematics was increasingly popular and every squire could make a rough equation: Dissent = anarchy, sedition, a demand for higher wages. Presbyterian landlords soon translated themselves into the squire's pew at the local church and joined with their royalist brothers in administering the crushing penalties of the Clarendon Code. The Code struck not only at the Dissenting poor of town and country, but at the large class of small tenant or yeoman farmer who showed dangerous signs of heat and liberty of the political conscience and a determination not to yield their boundaries to expanding estates. It is obvious that where the landlord not only framed the law in his capacity as a Member of Parliament, but administered it as justice of the peace, a considerable margin of unlawful intimidation could, and did, exist.

Having favourably regulated his own position with the Commons, the landlord at the same time insisted on a rationalisation of his obligations to the Crown. The feudal dues, which in the past had been paid by the gentry alone, and which formed the basic revenue of the King, were abolished and a supposed equivalent in excise duty (paid by everyone who bought imported goods) given in exchange. And if he only got half a million out of it instead of

the supposed £1,200,000, extra supplies could always be voted by his faithful Commons – provided they approved of the purpose.

This swift increase in their share of the nation's wealth was used by the more enterprising gentry (often ex-Commonwealth men), not only for the improvement of their estates, but to swell the invested capital of the City goldsmiths and the flourishing merchant companies who sent ships to trade with the Americas or the Indies. The joint stock company for the development of English industry was also beginning to grow – in particular for the exploitation of the coal mines of Derbyshire and Yorkshire, since these required heavy capital investment and entailed considerable risks. Drainage of the mines presented an almost insuperable technical difficulty and the miners were not meek, as were the soft-fingered and sedentary weavers, but turbulent in their demands for full and ready pay, 'without which', as one investor bitterly remarked, 'those damned fiends the colliers would not budge'.

Still, England was now producing something in the neighbourhood of 2,150,000 tons of coal a year, and providing the Dutch did not capture the ships on their southward journey, this represented a handsome profit for the investors and middlemen. All the chimneys in London were now accustomed to belch smoke and their owners paid for their fuel at free market prices.

Although only a very small minority of the population drew their total income from trade and industry, a great many of the more wealthy noblemen and squires had a finger in the commercial pie. A sizeable number of landowners now began their dual function as merchants or 'stewards of the kingdom's stock', and wealth could be seen to circulate with that mysterious natural liberty which was as desirable in money as it was dangerous in men.

Year by year the standard of living of the upper classes improved. They drank more French wines and ate exotic sweetmeats; imported silks and velvets clothed them ever more handsomely, to the injury of London silk weavers; they began to build more houses and lay out gardens, which glowed with Turkish tulips and shrubs from the Americas; the orange tree became a familiar sight and the yew topiary of Elizabethan gardens was partially replaced by sweet-smelling limes. The opportunity and desire to get rich im-

mensely stimulated a not ignoble curiosity, and natural science attracted numerous devotees. Noblemen made chemical experiments and philosophers adventured their persons in mines for the purpose of seeing if air pumps might prevent the frequent deaths from suffocation amongst the miners. All sorts of new methods of agriculture were tried and the most distinguished thinkers spent days pondering over drainage and forestry. However, in spite of these exploratory avenues, gentlemen were still principally land-owners and lived by the ownership and manipulation of property. A 'place' at Court, that is to say, the rough equivalent of salary and expenses of someone in the public service, was only obtained through patronage or by purchase for a large sum. It was almost, if not quite, impossible for a gentleman to 'earn' a living and the whole life of the gentry revolved upon their rent rolls.

There were no professions, no sciences or arts, that would yield remuneration sufficient to keep a gentleman in a gentleman's style. Consequently, all scientists, writers, doctors and poets had to live – if they were so unfortunate as to possess neither an acre nor a farm – under the patronage of some great house. If we accept the sum of £300 per annum, given by Lady Castlemaine as necessary for the maintenance of an upper-class London life, we can see that the arts, sciences and professions fell hopelessly below this. The Anglican Church provided a refuge for younger sons, but that swinging latitude in the way of patronage which distinguished the Augustan age had not yet arrived. Consequently, the brilliant, ambitious but impoverished person had to scrape along on a pittance and hope to attract the attention of a nobleman who would keep him or get him a 'place', or else he had to marry a fortune. This was why Pepys had to wait on his lady with so many pairs of gloves and listen to her tedious troubles, why Swift had to bow his haughty head over Sir William Temple's bread, and the friends of Sir Isaac Newton had to introduce him to the Royal Mint. This was also, incidentally, why the plot of every fashionable comedy was concerned with marrying 'a fortune'. Poverty was not genteel or morally beautiful, or indeed anything but simple degradation. The poor were necessary, both for philosophic and temporal reasons; they were there like sudden death in the early 'twenties, the bodies of criminals on the gallows, the coffins of small children and the

scars of the smallpox; necessary to God's will, but it was better not to be one of them.

II

In this new world, the familiar figure of Sir Anthony Ashley Cooper grows blurred, like an image lost in moving water; when it re-forms we see a man of the new times. That flaxen hair, 'soft and curling at the ends', is hidden by a great golden periwig; the complexion, once so transparent, has grown sallow from an incurable liver complaint; the eyes are powerful and the lips conceal secrets. The King, so much a foreigner in looks and manners, has taken him into his favour. In 1660 he was created Baron Ashley, and the following year saw him Chancellor of the Exchequer and Permanent Under-Secretary to the Treasury.

Evidently Ashley made every effort to conform to the manners fashionable at Court. The Protestant-Atheist, dressed luxuriously in black satins and brocades or in silver-grey, gave hunting parties at his Dorset house and lived fashionably in London. Encouraged by the King's good nature, he made retorts as biting and as impertinent as if he had been born and bred at Court.

One day, when he came to pay his respects, the King remarked in a casual aside, 'Here comes the greatest whoremaster in the kingdom.'

'Of a subject, Sir, I believe I am.'

He was so nearly 'one of us' – nearly, but not quite. For instance, he could not conceal the fact that he was industrious and interested in business. He worked hours at his office that were more suitable to a clerk than a great nobleman and he did not employ his spare time by plunging whole-heartedly into the fashionable vices. However, these were trifles compared to the fundamental difference which effectually separated him from his companions in the King's service; with the exception of a single trip to Breda, Ashley had never been abroad.

The King, and nearly all his intimate friends, had spent a good part of their lives upon the Continent, either in involuntary exile or in quest of education. They were not only familiar with foreign courts, manners and ideas, but had spent their most formative years in France. Spain or the Spanish Netherlands, where the Roman

Catholic philosophy had prevailed over dissident factions. Ashley had never had this experience. His vision was bounded by his native shores and his political thought coloured by the fact that he had grown to manhood during times when a radically new conception of government dominated the country. Whereas they saw the continental implications of every political move, he saw such moves largely from the confines of Wimborne St Giles.

His self-confidence, though it never had the stupidity of conceit, prevented him from being aware of this limitation in his experience. Not having seen with his own eyes how Hampton Court and Whitehall fell short of the splendour of Fontainebleau, not to mention Versailles, he did not fully realise the King's secret longings, and because Charles's manner was genial and his wit pleasant, it was fatally easy to view him as a magnification of 'the first gentleman of the county'. Probably he was happy advising him, showing him how he could best be served, while taking a legitimate pleasure in his own cleverness and greatness. 'Smart' is the adjective which irresistibly rises to the modern mind, to describe the poise and precision of this ingenious personality. His fortune was certainly not impaired by office, and his ideas on foreign policy were opportunist, uncoloured by any vicarious suffering, sympathy or indignation. He knew as well as any how to be a careful enemy of his fellow ministers and he had a penetrating understanding of the Duke of York.

Early in his career, he formed an opinion of the two brothers which his subsequent experiences never caused him to change. In his view the relationship between them was governed by the moral ascendancy of the younger over the elder. The Duke of York, he says, 'Is in every way a perfect Stuart and hath the advantage of his brother, only that he hath ambition and thoughts of attaining something he hath not, which gives him industry and address even beyond his natural parts. Yet his conduct, courage, judgement or honour are not much to be confided in . . . he hath declared himself of the Popish religion of all others the most contrary to the interest of England. . . . Yet this religion suits well his temper, heady, violent and bloody, who easily believes the rashest and worse of councils to be most sincere and hearty. His elder brother is much the abler man, and hates him perfectly, and he knows it. Yet he hath

the ascendant over him, and by little acts and importunity doth much with him, and seems to govern all. . . . His interests and designs are to introduce a military and arbitrary government in his brother's time, which only can secure a man of his religion a quiet possession of his beloved Crown.'

He who sees everything understands nothing. The King did not like clever men or clever women. He liked 'good servants' and the moment he felt the quality of an able mind, repulsion stirred in his bosom. However, in raising the ex-Parliamentarian to be one of the most spectacular figures decorating the outworks of his policy, he had been both clever and generous. The fact that Ashley was not admitted to that privy path trod only by himself, his brother, Clifford and Arlington, was not, in the King's view, a reasonable ground for complaint. During their various pleasant conversations he perceived that the little baron's views on public affairs were grotesquely different from his own. He was not the 'first gentleman of the county' but a monarch, not an enlightened Anglican but a Roman Catholic, not interested in expressing the will of Parliament, but in dispensing with it.

For years Ashley remained ignorant of the royal meditations and conclusions. He had no idea that after one of those interesting conversations in a closet, when he had given the King the most affable and witty advice and had had it received in the most flattering manner, Charles took up his pen on being left alone and wrote a letter to his sister expressing contrary opinions. He did not know that Clifford was so much more powerful than he appeared; that the King spoke to York, 'whom he perfectly hated', with tears in his eyes as brother to brother; and that while he himself was energetically furthering what he imagined to be the royal policy, a different one was secretly maturing through other channels. This is where a continental experience would have been invaluable: as it was, he was ignorant of how royal persons were accustomed to behave.

It is difficult to determine the precise nature of Ashley's opinions on the all important question of foreign policy. Keenly interested as he was in trade and commerce, he could have had no love for the Dutch Republic, which had successfully captured the whole Baltic trade and fought an even game with the English in distant

oceans. In this he would have agreed with Andrew Marvell, that the Dutch were 'the undigested vomit of the sea'. However, a desire to see Dutch shipping swept from the seas was one thing; but conniving at the dismemberment of the Republic for the profit of the enormously powerful French monarchy, was quite another, and one, so it was subsequently said, that he never approved. Certainly, had he known them, he would never have approved of the secret clauses of Madame's treaty for the recognition of Louis as heir to the Spanish throne and of the establishment of the Roman Catholic religion in England. However, it is undeniable that either from an ambitious determination to stay in the King's councils at any cost, or from genuine conviction, he was one of those ministers who acquiesced in the King's plan, revealed after Madame's visit in 1669, for war against the Republic. His signature was on the *traite simulé* and it is not to be supposed that he scrupled to join the King and the other ministers in their game of protesting again and again to the Dutch Ambassador their friendship and consciousness of their obligations under the Triple Alliance, while secretly making preparations for attack. Possibly he would have shared the amusement of the French minister, Lionne, who wrote of the Dutch statesman, Conrad van Beuningen, then in London: 'The poor dupe will be furious when he sees the last scene of the comedy in which he had so long played a pitiful part, which will be nothing less than the complete destruction of the United Provinces, who, if they were to be suffered to continue their existence at all, would only be allowed to do so as a mere appanage to the King of France.'

The curtain fell on the last act of the comedy in April 1672. The King of France declared war and sent an army of 175,000 men to invade the Republic.

It may be imagined that after all these years of preparation, the excitement in Whitehall was intense. The chief concern of the King and his ministers was to participate in the war immediately and on a scale sufficient to ensure a fair share of the spoils. Ashley pressed for Parliament to be taken into the King's confidence so that supplies could be voted in the normal way; but the King preferred not to risk an argument with the Commons and financed himself by a double act of piracy. In the first instance, it was

directed against his own subjects and consisted of abruptly suspending payment on Crown loans; in the second it was directed against the Dutch fleets homeward bound from Smyrna, which he commanded to be seized without a declaration of war. Although there is evidence that Ashley was opposed to both these expedients, he was still energetic in furthering the main plan of campaign, and before the end of that eventful April his services were rewarded by the Earldom of Shaftesbury and the post of Lord Treasurer.

Unfortunately the unprecedented rapidity with which the French armies were engulfing the Republic looked like robbing the English of any chance to participate in the spoils of war. Indeed, the envoy hurriedly despatched by the King of England was bluntly told by the French that 'each party was to keep what they had got; that the English were not in a condition to make such demands . . . and that they would look only to the business of the Flag and the fishing'.

The Flag and the fishing! Death and destruction would have run through Whitehall with a sweeter sound. Was it for this that during three long years of work and anxiety Charles and his ministers had plotted the ruin of Holland? The memory of Madame's confident prediction of 'the ease with which you could hold the towns near to you' must have been maddening to the King. There looked like being no towns to hold. Buckingham and Arlington were despatched to the Prince of Orange, who was now in command of what was left of the Republic, but the bargain they offered him was contemptuously refused. In return for the recognition of his own rights, the English were to occupy the so-called 'cautionary towns', Flushing, Sluys and the Brill, as payment for their troops being garrisoned there; guarantees would also be given with regard to saluting the Flag, the fishing rights, and indemnity and concessions in the East Indies. To the frantic threats and offers of the English ministers the Prince returned the reply that he intended to resist the French and if need be, 'die in the last ditch'.

Now was painfully revealed all the presumptuous folly of an impoverished government hoping to compete on equal terms with a nation four times its size and infinitely superior in wealth and military technique. The war was unpopular. This unpalatable fact

faced King Charles and his ministers during what was to prove a disastrous winter. The failure to force capitulation on the Dutch Republic created a situation in which the nation was able to recover from the surprising events of the summer and to take stock of the facts.

III

The disruption of the export trade, the financial intrigues of the government, which found expression in the repudiation of Crown loans, had disgusted, if not actually ruined, many London merchants; and the disgust of the wealthy was felt in a most unpleasant way by the classes beneath them. It was suddenly realised that foreign policy, which had hitherto been a private affair of the Royal family, was of vital interest to everyone. Appalled by the revelation of French power, the English, looking into the future, wondered what share of the world's wealth would be left to them once Europe had succumbed to the French monarch.

This thought was also beginning to trouble the Lord Chancellor. The purpose of the war, as Shaftesbury understood it, was to secure an expansion of English interests at the expense of the Dutch; consequently the King's lassitude in looking after these interests, and his apparently immovable faith in the French monarchy, were increasingly disturbing.

The Chancellor had known for some time that the King was secretly a Catholic. Shaftesbury's faithful secretary, Mr Stringer, says in a fragment of biography, 'Some time after, the Duke of Lauderdale, having by means of the Countess of Dysart, made the same discovery of his Majesty performing his devotions in the Queen's oratory, came in like manner to acquaint our Earl.' It is supposed that 'like' refers to the Duke of Buckingham and that he was the first to discover the King's Catholicism. Shaftesbury was perfectly prepared to regard this as a private matter. It would be easy to convince himself that the King was a moderate and rational man, if somewhat weak, and that in his religious beliefs he was yielding to the Duke of York, but was by no means an enthusiastic convert. However, during the winter of '73, information came his way, which put a very different complexion upon affairs. A news-sheet suddenly appeared in England entitled *England's Appeal from*

the Private Cabal at Whitehall, which gave a very accurate summary of the grand design. It was believed to have been written by Peter de Moulin, now the Prince of Orange's secretary and formerly a clerk in Arlington's office. Shaftesbury would have read this and would certainly have done all he could to investigate its truth, for if what the writer said was true, then he found himself in a very extraordinary situation.

It is never pleasant for a clever and self-confident man to discover that he has been made a fool of, particularly when this happens, on a gigantic scale. Shaftesbury believed he had had the King's confidence and in this belief he had fought his battles in Parliament and supported him in the Declaration of Indulgence, which was designed to give freedom of worship to Dissenters and Catholics. Now all these things took on a different look. The fury of Parliament reduced the King and his ministers to a state of terror inconsistent with a clear conscience. Instead of attempting boldly to end their dependence on French policy, which might have done much to appease Parliament, they retreated on all fronts. It is said that it was Arlington who broke down and admitted the King's true plight to Shaftesbury: that he was pledged to the French King beyond any hope of withdrawal.

By whatever means Shaftesbury came to know of the King's designs, he was aware of them at last during that stormy March of '73. Parliament was unappeased by the abandonment of the Declaration of Indulgence, and three weeks later was clamouring for all who would not take the Anglican sacrament to be barred from public office. Rising from the woosack, a pale figure in his gown of office, the Lord Chancellor spoke in favour of the Test. 'We are mighty busy here, swearing against the Pope,' wrote one Englishman to another that summer.

The congregation of St Martin-in-the-Fields rose in a body and cried, 'God Bless Him!' when the Duke of Monmouth, paying a lightning visit to England, appeared to take the Test. Others refused to swear: Clifford, the Lord Treasurer, departed to Devonshire and died by his own hand; the Duke of York went from the Admiralty not to die, but to wed a new Catholic wife in defiance of the nation. Arlington was quiet as a mouse, Buckingham loudly disgusted, and the King had an apoplectic spasm.

The English end of the grand design had met with a decisive check.

On the Continent, however, the great French armies, refreshed by the summer, again looked like engulfing the wretched Republic. Luxembourg was at Utrecht, Turcnne in Westphalia. Such feeble allies as the Dutch had were stopped by French armies or bought off by French bribes. The great Dutch fort of Maastricht fell – though it cost the French nine thousand men. Any reasonable man might expect to see the end of the Republic by the autumn.

It is not to be supposed that the King and his brother had expected their aims to be achieved without opposition. In their long struggle against the English they had had twelve years' start and with care, courage and statecraft, all might yet be saved. Unfortunately for the King, however, fate during that summer dealt him one of those blows which neither prudence nor care could have foreseen.

The English fleet, commanded by Prince Rupert, was beaten by the Dutch off the Texel and thus an English landing on the Dutch islands was made impossible. As the nation saw itself deprived of any fruits from this expensive war, anti-French fever rose higher. Shame, too, may have added to the fury, for while the great English men-of-war, riding the summer swell, bore down on the smaller Dutch ships to rake them with their cannon, the French fleet waited aloof. Perhaps there were some aboard who had no keen desire to fight; who knew that the enemy, behind the bursts of orange gunfire, was battling for something more than rich cargoes, and that de Ruyter would not concede the salute to the English flag today.

At home the inaction of the French fleet was probably rightly interpreted as a desire to prevent the English from obtaining any gains from the conflict. Prices were soaring in the City, heavy rain was ruining the crops, and the Court must have been conscious that the end of the war was near.

Shaftesbury was still officially a member of this Court. 'Prince Rupert and he are observed to converse very much together and are very good friends, and indeed I see his Highness's coach often at his door. They are looked upon to be the great Parliament-men and for the interest of old England.'

When Parliament reassembled that autumn, the Chancellor made

the customary speeches for the Crown, but possibly he was aware that the Commons would refuse to vote supplies for the war. Instead they began to discuss grievances and evil councillors.

'Grievance' and 'evil councillor' had an unpleasant sound to the Court. The King prorogued Parliament and selected this moment to deprive Shaftesbury of the Great Seal. As the French Ambassador wrote in a succinct despatch to his government:

I was informed that the King would infallibly in the course of the day take away the seals from the Chancellor, and I had the confirmation of this news in the evening at Whitehall, when Prince Rupert, the Duke of Ormond, and all their cabal showed plainly by their sad faces their annoyance at the disgrace of their friend. On the other hand the Queen, the Duke of York, who has the chief part in this business, and all who are well intentioned towards the royal family and are opposed to the other party, showed in their faces the joy which they felt, and congratulated me on the disgrace of the greatest enemy of France, and I may add without passion of the most knavish unjust and dishonest man in England: but a discarded minister who is very ill-conditioned and clever left perfectly free to act and speak, seems to me to be much to be feared in this country.

The discarded minister was now in the position to redeem his signature upon the King's sham treaty. It is reported that when the Great Seal was sent for he said, 'It is but laying down my gown and putting on my sword.'

FOUR

THE CAMPAIGN IN THE LORDS

WHEN 'our Earl', to use a felicitous term of Mr Stringer's, turned his back upon the Court and went into the open lands of opposition, he went there in search of allies.

It might have been expected that he would turn first to that body which traditionally represented the 'stewards of the kingdom's stock', namely the House of Commons, but the situation here was a contradictory one. The alarm of the members had been expressed in vigorous though limited action. In 1674 they forced the King to withdraw from the war and passed the Test Act, which removed Papists from Public Office. However, at this point an uncomfortable duality of interest entered into their calculations and made their future actions unpredictable. The majority of members had been elected fourteen years ago, 'while the nation was in a fit, or rather a fury of loyalty', and they had sat so long, and acquired in the manner of the times, such a vested interest in their seats that the possibility of relinquishing them was abhorrent in the extreme. 'Many of them were ruined in their fortunes, and lived upon their privileges and their pensions. So they had got it among them for a maxim which contributed not a little to our preservation while we were in such hands, that as they must not give the King too much at a time, lest there should have been no more use for them, so they were to take care not to starve the Court neither, lest they themselves should be starved by that means.'

From their point of view the widespread popular discontent had an undeniably evil side – it tended to elevate in the public esteem those who, having long had grievances against the government, were now both joyous and vociferous at having a popular cause. 'No popery!' was the cry, which always sounded very loudly when it came from Dissenting throats. Consequently every Royalist

member who was a country justice fell a prey to extreme agitation at the thought of a new parliament. God and the freeholders alone knew what elections in the present temper of the country would produce; probably a majority of old Presbyterians and Commonwealth men. In fact, they were in the precarious position of the lid on a cauldron, which, while rattling in sympathy with the boiling contents, is determined not to be blown sky high. And the government, like a good cook, set about to reduce the pressure.

The first action of the King was to call in a newcomer to reorganise his headquarters. Sir Thomas Osborne was a very serviceable Yorkshireman, and with his shrewd eyes and apologetic chin, must have appeared to the King as a pleasant change from some of his former ministers, whose showy wit and sense of personal importance had proved so useless in a crisis. He welcomed him to the Court without discomposure, and shortly afterwards created him Lord Danby, giving him Clifford's old post of Treasurer.

Guided by Danby, who would nowadays be described as a public relations officer – and a very successful one he was – the King sought a closer alliance with the Parliamentary right wing – with the Bishops, who feared the nether rumblings of Dissent more than they did Rome, and with those members of the lower house who most feared the loss of their seats in an election. A small monetary gift had recently been received from Louis, and this was employed to good effect in 'taking off' those in whom self-interest had still to win a decisive victory over patriotic impulse.

Events on the Continent supplemented the arguments of foreign gold, for, with the waning year, the war took on an illusion of stability. The Republic had again gathered some allies. The Emperor was now in the field; Spanish troops were arriving in some numbers; and a precarious front was being held against the French. Seeing the prospect of a total victory for Louis receding, the Commons began to show a disinclination to interfere any further in the King's affairs.

The Court's counter-attack was not openly aimed at the resuscitation of the old foreign policy, but at the re-establishment of the King's internal authority. For this purpose another kind of Test Oath was framed for those who would hold office under the Crown.

Short as it was, it was ably designed to place any rebellious minister within the pale of treason.

I do declare that it is not lawful upon any pretence whatsoever to take up arms against the King, and that I do abhor that traiterous position of taking arms by his authority against his person, or against those that are commissioned by him in pursuance of such commission, and I do swear that I will not at any time endeavour the alteration of the Government either in Church or State, so help me God.

From a House of Commons who would put this Oath in the Statute book, Shaftesbury could expect no help. Recognising that neither the popular feeling, nor the popular will, could find expression in this corrupted body, he was forced to take advantage of his status as a peer to open the attack in the House of Lords.

Some old Parliament men were numbered among the hereditary peers, and these formed a nucleus of resistance. All Shaftesbury's family connections, old friendships and new flatteries were revived or employed to form a party that would make its first demonstration in a stand against the non-resisting Oath. Buckingham, Carlisle, Holles, Falconbridge, Mordaunt and Delamere were with him when he rose to make his attack. He needed all the wit he could command, for there were some who were 'very piquish against our Earl' and waited to see him slip upon the dangerous argument of when it was lawful to resist the King.

Fortunately there was the example of Henry VI. A lunatic, fallen into the hands of his acknowledged enemies, set a safe precedent for rebellion, though Shaftesbury, with a kind of insinuating nastiness, described him only as 'soft and weak' and managed to suggest a parallel between his fate and that of a Charles Stuart fallen under the influence of Papists and Frenchmen.

Let us put the case [he said]: A future King of England should be of the same temper with Henry VI and shall be taken prisoner by any accident, by Spaniards, Dutch or French, which should then be an overpowering power and should both with the person and commission of the King invade England; were it not suitable with our loyalties to join with the Son of that

Prince for the defence of his father's crown and dignity, even against the person and commission of the King?

Son – this was the word that slipped into the listening chamber and sank beneath ripples of speculation. If the King heard it he would make no comment, for the most dangerous warnings are received in silence.

The debate of this No-Resisting Bill ran on like some furious and bitter sea battle; spars were carried away, bursts of gunshot, smoke and spray, obscured the picture, vessels were boarded or, saddest of all, struck their colours.

If you ask after the Earl of Carlisle, the Lord Viscount Falconbridge and the Lord Berkeley of Berkeley Castle because you find them not mentioned amongst all their old friends, all I have to say is that the Earl of Carlisle stepped aside to receive his pension the Lord Berkeley to dine with the Lord Treasurer; but the Lord Viscount Falconbridge, like the nobleman in the gospel, went away sorrowful for he had a great office in Court. But I despair not of giving you a better account of them next session, for it is not possible when they consider, that Cromwell's major-general, son-in-law and friend should think to find their accounts amongst men that set up on such a bottom.

This succinct passage comes from one of the first of the Opposition's famous pamphlets, which, secretly printed and distributed, had a telling effect on public opinion.¹

However, in spite of all the Opposition could do in these raging midnight debates, when Buckingham mocked the Bishops 'infinitely pleasant', it looked as if the Court would have sufficient strength to pass the Bill, when, by a brilliant interventionist tactic, Shaftesbury was able to cut across the whole matter by raising a quarrel between the two Houses on a supposed breach of privilege. Parliament was prorogued for the summer and when it met again in October, the question of privilege – whether a certain Dr Shirley had the right to appeal to the Lords from a decision in Chancery –

¹ *A letter from a Person of Quality to His Friend in the Country* was not unreasonably supposed to have been written by Shaftesbury himself, for it contained the material passages of his speeches in the debate. It is possible, though, that its editor was Ferguson.

was immediately taken up and used as an oblique path by which to attack the Court.

In his speech defending this right of appeal, Shaftesbury delivered a notable broadside. Couched in his noble, impartial style, in contrast with the skilful and, it must be admitted, unpleasant insinuation of his Henry VI speech, it is, in fact, the language of 'Little Sincerity', the virtuoso role in which he was so particularly detested by his enemies.

After delivering a warning that in certain circumstances the Judges and judicature in general, might become nothing but the King's creatures and be able, by right of statute, to supersede the common law of England, he goes on to argue with his fellow peers on the necessity of vigilantly maintaining their right as the nation's final court of appeal.

It is not only your concern that you maintain yourselves in it; but it is the concern of the poorest man in England that you keep your station. It is your Lordships' concern and that so highly, that I will be bound to say, the King can give none of you a requital or a recompense for it. What are empty titles? What is present power, or riches, and a great estate, wherein I have no firm fixed property? It is the constitution of the Government and maintaining it, that secures your Lordships and every man else in what he hath. The poorest Lord, if the birthright of his peerage be maintained, has a fair prospect before him for himself or his posterity. But the greatest title, with the greatest power and riches, is but a mean creature; and maintains those in absolute monarchies no otherwise than by servile and low flatteries, and upon uncertain terms.

My Lords, it is not only your interest, but the interest of the nation, that you maintain your rights; for, let the House of Commons and gentry of England think what they please, there is no prince that ever governed without nobility or an army. If you will not have one, you must have the other, or the monarchy cannot long support or keep itself from tumbling into a democratical republic.

This observation, still relevant two hundred and seventy years later, provided alternatives which might be expected to be

equally nauseating to a solid central body such as Shaftesbury hoped the Lords to be—an absolute monarchy supported by dragoons; or a plunge into that abyss of anarchy, a democratical republic.

Though he was sincere in his desire to win the support of his audience, it is to be doubted if this particular argument was not chosen rather to suit the circumstances than out of personal conviction. The process of separation, by which a practical necessity becomes an abstract theory held for itself alone, was not one to which a nature such as his was easily subject. In upholding the prerogative of the peerage he was executing a tactic rather than taking his stand upon a principle. It might well be argued that this was a very dangerous expedient, and one which might, in changed circumstances, be used against his party with very ill effect. It was not the action or the speech of a cautious man. But as a leader, Shaftesbury was crafty rather than prudent, and it is this skilful audacity in attack which gives the look of an opportunist to one, who for the rest of his life, pursued a single end with extraordinary tenacity.

When he turns to speak of foreign policy, he lays the whole situation before the house with lucid gravity.

I could almost say that the harmony, good agreement and concord which are to be prayed for at other times, may be fatal to us now. We owe the peace of these last two years and the disengagements from the French interest to the two houses differing from the sense and opinion of Whitehall. So at this time, the thing in the world this nation hath most reason to apprehend is a general peace, which cannot now happen without very advantageous terms to the French, and disadvantageous to the House of Austria.

We are the King's great counsellors, and if so have a right to differ and give contrary counsels to those few that are nearest about him. I fear they would advance a general peace. I am sure I would advise against it and hinder it, at this time by all the ways imaginable. I heartily wish nothing from you may add weight and reputation to those counsels that would assist the French. No money for ships, nor preparations you can make nor personal

assurances our prince can have, can secure us from the French if they are at leisure.

The French King is grown the most potent of us all at sea: he has built twenty-four ships this last year, and has thirty more than we; besides the advantage that our ships are all out of order, and his so exquisitely provided for that every ship has its particular storehouse. It is incredible the money he hath, and what he has laid out in making harbours. He makes even nature itself give way to the vastness of his expense: and after all this, shall a prince so wise, so intent upon his affairs be thought to make all these preparations to sail over land, and fall on the back of Hungary, and batter the walls of Kaminietz? Or is it possible he should oversee his interest in seizing of Ireland? - a thing so feasible to him if he be master of the seas, as he certainly now is; and which, when attained, gives him all the southern Mediterranean, East and West India trade, and renders him, both by situation and excellent harbours, perpetual master of the sea without dispute.

'It is incredible the wealth he hath. . . .' This is the secret of the French King's power to dumbfound the English. It was wealth on a scale which the mind of an Englishman had difficulty even in imagining. Not one of the temporal or spiritual peers who listened to Shaftesbury had any doubt as to the mysterious power of money - a power which roused in them a superstitious, almost a religious awe. No one knew how much wealth there was in England, or the rate at which it was increasing - even its origin was not precisely defined. In their minds these distant territories of the Indies or the Americas, Hungary or Turkey, were glazed with foreign gold, enormous potential sources of the showers of ready cash which the French King used with almost supernatural effect.

Charles I had never had an ally such as Louis. This thought must have been at the back of many minds as they watched the easy figure of the King listening to their anxious debate. When they had finished, he exercised his power of solitary action: he prorogued Parliament again.

FIVE

THE PROTESTANT DUKE

I

THE CAMPAIGN in the Lords had been a failure. This was the fact which a man as practical and astute as Shaftesbury quickly recognised. In spite of brilliant forensic achievements and some tactical successes, the Court had a majority in the Upper House, as they had in the Lower. Temporarily the avenue of Parliamentary change was closed.

One of the symptoms of a revolutionary period is the increasing number of people drawn into an active interest in politics. Although the fluctuating parliamentary temperature seemed to have stabilised itself at its usual royalist level, this was by no means true of the country, where the trading and yeoman classes were showing more dissatisfaction with public affairs than they had shown since the Restoration. Already this fermentation had a class aspect and it was noted by observers that in many districts any well-dressed man was liable to be called 'French dog' and be roughly handled.

Memories of his Oxford days, when he had so successfully organised the freshmen against the seniors, must have stirred in Shaftesbury as he contemplated this enormous potential power moving spasmodically to the point of organisation. A party raised from the countryside, a 'Country' party, if well planned, would have the strength of a military force. It could demand and obtain the dissolution of Parliament. It could then proceed to elect a new one.

This was the prospect which, in secret, gripped the hearts of men of all factions. It was the root of the hysteria which made the Royalist, Lord Digby, cry out to Shaftesbury, 'You are against the King and for seditions and factions and for a commonwealth and I will prove it, and, by God, we will have your head next session'; for on the most sober calculation, the middle class, if determined and well organised, could elect a majority to the House of

Commons. The boroughs or towns had a higher proportion of seats than the countryside, and even there, the restriction of the franchise to freeholders meant that the squires could not utilise their tenants.

The middle classes also had, at this moment, allies above and below. The Puritan squires – very numerous in the West – would join them in agitation for a new parliament, and rising prices, competition with French manufacturers and growing unemployment were goading the wage earners into protest, which, though at the moment formless and denied all legitimate expression, was beginning to generate its own power.

Among all these varied groups Shaftesbury sent his 'friends'. He was already collecting about him a nucleus of those professional political organisers, in this age termed 'plotters', who in future years were to produce so many famous pamphlets and to create and wield a new form of political power. The Country Party was growing.

Implicit in this growth was the need for a constructive programme; for a change comparable to the effort of generation. It was obvious that the negative, anti-French, anti-Papist objective would not do, and that men's minds were already reaching out to the fundamental legal transference of power from Crown to Commons; an idea which had, as a practical corollary, changes in the personal succession to the Crown.

Fifteen years after the Restoration the dynastic prospect was, curiously enough, unchanged. The King's heir was still his brother, who, though two years his junior, might possibly predecease him. Nevertheless, this fact gave the Duke of York a significance and a power which King's brothers do not usually enjoy; furthermore, being a public Roman Catholic and recently married to a young and Catholic bride, his co-religionists naturally assumed that he would soon be rendered even more powerful by the birth of a son. The two daughters of his first Duchess, Ann Hyde, lived mostly at Richmond with their governess, and were educated as Protestants. No one took much notice of them, for it was assumed that they would soon be displaced by a brother.

When Shaftesbury came to the conclusion that the Duke of York was an impossible proposition for England – which seems to have been on the day on which he first set eyes on him – there were four other possibilities: one, that Queen Catherine would die or

be divorced, so that the King could marry again; or that the^t succession should be diverted to two, Prince Rupert, three, William of Orange, four, the Duke of Monmouth.

The first had originally been favoured, but the Queen seemed disinclined to die, or the King to divorce her, and by the year 1675 it is possible that Shaftesbury no longer keenly desired the King to have a son. As for the existing candidates, the years had weathered the fiery Rupert into a good Protestant, but he was undeniably old, absorbed in chemical experiments and a bachelor. William of Orange was in some respects very suitable, but he was a Dutchman and the English were profoundly distrustful of foreigners. Such Dutch sympathies as they had, were centred in the States and not in the House of Orange. So there remained the last choice.

Politics had long lain in ambush for the Duke of Monmouth. If he had been born his father's son, he was now to be adopted by a situation. This was a genuine case of art improving on nature, a process of which the subject, or victim, was at first unconscious. To begin with, his status was vague. Not since the time of Henry VIII had any English sovereign owned an illegitimate child, and the continental idea of a royal bastard enjoying royal privileges was unknown. Undoubtedly he was a member of the Royal Family. As a child he drove in a coach with the King and Queen, when the Court was in mourning he wore a violet robe and walked after Prince Rupert. A nobleman had been appointed his governor, he danced before the King with his hat on, he displayed the Royal arms on his coach, he was styled in patents 'most entirely beloved son', and on his marriage to a great Scottish heiress, she had been created a Duchess before the ceremony. Now in his twenties, he held the foremost appointment in the kingdom after that of Admiral of the Fleet, Captain General of the King's Forces.

Naturally the English wondered. People were ignorant of the details of the King's life during his exile and all that was positively known of the Duke of Monmouth's origin, was that his mother was dead. Might she not have been privately married to the King? To simple minds this would go far to explain his extraordinary status and make it indeed a sort of suitable English compromise between the claims of royalty and morality. From the first this had been borne out by various stories: there was a Welshman holding

some minor position at the Court who talked 'very broad of his sister having been married to the King'. Monmouth himself had publicly declared that 'he would kill any man who said his mother was not married to the King', and there had been an exciting incident when the Duke of York had had the adjective 'natural' interpolated before 'son' in a Royal patent and Monmouth's secretary had snipped it out with scissors.

As early as 1667 the Duke of Buckingham and Shaftesbury had suggested to the King that he declare Monmouth his heir, and that they would 'prove' his marriage to his mother. The King rejected this idea, but in such a way that he left the impression that he would like to have agreed.

That was nearly ten years ago, when the subject of these tentative plans was only an unconscious youth of sixteen. But now, at twenty-six, he showed some signs of seriousness and responsibility, of a maturing growth of personality which somehow or other, like a flower in a ruin, contrived to take shape against the background of his father's Court.

Possessing those qualities which are commended and approved in the nursery, for they set off a child's simplicity - neatness, generous good manners, diligence with whatever is in hand, and a sense of fairness which has nothing to do with the adult intellectual concept of justice -- he was able to bring to his first mature enthusiasm a certain understanding. A military career was often the choice of convention, but in his case it seems to have been inspired by genuine desire. The experience of Versailles, and a taste of campaigning under the great French marshals would have made a great impact on an impressionable boy; praise was lavished on him, but possibly this in itself was not as delightful as the consciousness of talents hitherto unused and the sudden opportunity of making a career and a future for himself by his own efforts.

Now he spent a good deal of his time in his cabinet considering the proper order of his regiment, and later, of the whole of the King's forces. Perhaps nothing very original emerged from his meditations; nevertheless he did understand what constituted the basic principles of successful military service and he tried to see that they were observed. The men must be properly dressed and regularly paid, and the promotion of officers should proceed some-

what according to their merit as well as their purse. Again and again, in all his observations on the armed forces, particular stress is laid on two things: the men must be civil and obliging, not brutal and undisciplined, and they must be treated well. If his directions make no striking contribution to military science, humanity and sense are always present.

Then there were his supplementary duties as Master of the Horse. These required a capacity for organisation, as well as considerable tact, for not only had the Court to be removed from place to place like a travelling circus, but the horses and escorts provided for A. must not be notably inferior to those given to B. Obliging as he was, he probably performed these functions well.

So, in spite of all that spoiling could do, by some happy accident of nature Monmouth was growing into a young man of whom no one need be ashamed. Everyone said his father loved him deeply and he probably assumed that one day he would be recognised as the heir. Meanwhile he had no enemy but his Uncle York, no inconvenience except his wife, and he usually managed to score off the first and elude the second; a pattern of behaviour that would always be repeated.

One of the most tantalising questions of these years is, when did Shaftesbury decide to claim the succession for Monmouth?

In a sense he was, of course, the only possible alternative to the party that rejected William of Orange. Shaftesbury had met William during his visits to England and the two men had exchanged compliments, but there is no reason to suppose that sufficient mutual confidence was kindled to make either willing to be the other's expedient. Looking at that pale, narrow face—a paper face cut by expert scissors—William would have recalled the ex-Chancellor's support of the war, and Shaftesbury would have remembered the de Witts torn to pieces in the August dust and sun while Orange streamers hung from the trees.¹ Two ambitious men, with quite different ends in view, will never agree.

On the other hand, Shaftesbury must have liked Monmouth. This fact emerges very early in their relations and becomes clearer,

¹ The Grand Pensionary, John de Witt and his brother, Admiral Cornelius de Witt, were murdered at the Hague by an Orangist mob during the military disasters of 1673, for which their enemies held them to be responsible.

as the years go on. It was probably obvious to him that the boy had no political views at all for, of all the Stuarts, he was the least 'perfect'. But he would also have discovered, what the boy's tutor had noticed many years before, that he had a natural aptitude and willingness to learn. For Shaftesbury instruction was not without its pleasant moments; he always liked the role of popular tutor, and there would have been many times when in an easy and amusing way he would have discoursed on this, or explained that, and in the young Monmouth he glimpsed the virgin empire of an amiable and ignorant heart. Monmouth himself would never have realised anything, except that Shaftesbury's company was strangely stimulating. Perhaps he visited him at his house and sat in the garden, listening to the conversation which was sometimes so brilliant that Mr Locke got out his tablets and wrote it down as they spoke. Shaftesbury had a natural love of history and a creative gift for making it relevant to the present. Government and philosophy, religion and science, were among the ever-present topics, and speculations upon mending the world never became such airy sallies that wit could not secure them a retreat.

Here, he may for the first time have heard the State of Nature defined by Shaftesbury's clever secretary, Mr Locke. It would be difficult not to agree with the construction of his Eden, for Mr Locke's argument was as rational as his ideas were prosperous and pleasant. Only the necessity of preserving property had induced mankind to consent to government, and it followed from this that government was a practical function designed for the service of the community, and not a divine institution directly representing God. Viewed from this enlightened standpoint, history took on a different look, and many profound mysteries would have shrunk to mean expedients, ripe for discarding.

'The impudence of a bawd is modesty compared to that of a convert.' This observation, so neatly framed by Lord Halifax, might have been particularly applicable to Monmouth at this time, and if he ever came bursting into the King's closet, eager to express his new ideas, he was likely to meet with amusement or irritation from his father, and from his uncle, a sour and contemptuous disapproval.

With his uncle his relations had recently been worsened by

certain amorous affairs in which he had behaved very impertinently. So it went on: every month, almost every week, provided some fresh cause for rivalry, and the chasm between St James's and the Cockpit, where Monmouth lodged, grew impassable except to the most expert tight-rope walkers

The King watched this situation developing. Now and then he would put out a finger to check the balance, but it is almost impossible to avoid the conclusion that the existence of the two rival camps suited him very well. After all, as his brother must have pointed out to him in many a bitter interview, *he* had created the Duke of Monmouth.

II

During the period 1675-76, the stabilised political situation at home continued to favour the Court. The struggle of Shaftesbury and his friends to bring about the dissolution of Parliament on a technical issue ended in the champions of dissolution being sent to the Tower by their peers for breach of privilege.

The Court rejoiced at this unexpected relief, as did the King of France, who was preparing another great attack on the Republic.

Few men can have been kept harder at work during the next few months than was the French Ambassador, in his task of plcing, haggling over, and distributing bribes. This was the season of 'salads and subsidies'. From the King's two million *livres* down to a dozen bottles of champagne for a minor member of the Commons, half the persons in public life were clamouring to be bought at a good price. And the price rose steeply when the French offensive opened in Flanders, and the great cities fell. Cambrai, Valenciennes, Cassel. Once again the horrible conflict of self-interest set the Commons in a fever, and the virtues of immediate cash paled somewhat against the long-term dangers to English trade if the French overran the Netherlands.

However, Charles gauged what this ferment was worth. One evening the Dutch Ambassador remarked truculently that the Parliament showed a good deal of sympathy with the cause of the Republic. The King was holding a laced handkerchief at the time, and tossing it in the air before the Dutchman's face, he caught it and exclaimed, 'I care just *that* for Parliament!'

The King had often been accused of forgetting his friends, but he never forgot his interests. In his long, sensitive and tenacious memory there was no breach in continuity, no hiatus of consciousness. He remembered, and his memories gave shape and meaning to his existence, for they were memories of fear.

Like many people of his type, an emergency always found him alert, skilful and brave; at the final point he could always react with courage to the crystallisation of danger. But he was always on the watch, always thinking back to that time when he had had to fly for his life from the people who were now his subjects.

He knew well enough that his present control over affairs might prove ephemeral. The country was now in a state where any decisive event on the Continent, such as the collapse of the Republic, would have unforeseeable consequences. It was true that the agitation in the country was impotent while the present Parliament sat, that the Lords were not decided on any programme, but he could already discern the shape of hostile forces which, waiting for the right event, would materialise overnight into a great coalition. Fear had given him an acute insight into the real aims of the Country Party. They were for a Commonwealth – however they might disguise or conceal it, that was their aim. He knew of course – indeed who should know it better? – that the true and deadly aims are never mentioned in public by those who hold them, but are hidden beneath public cries designed to capture the gross majority, who, having no conscious views at all, respond to the varying stimuli of interests and prejudices. Just as his public cry was ‘the Law and the Anglican Church and the squire enjoying his manor’, so was Shaftesbury’s, ‘the Protestant heir and check to the French’.

The only available, the only possible, Protestant heir suitable to act as a portent for a Commonwealth, was his son Monmouth. So much was clear. Monmouth was the card that Shaftesbury not only intended to, but *must* play.

The clever and indeed necessary counter-move was to take him up on this issue; to provide another Protestant heir who, while being wholly unacceptable to Commonwealth men, would attract the many moderates who might otherwise be driven to support Shaftesbury’s candidate. Now his nephew William was a foreigner,

a Dutchman and a Latitudinarian, his two nieces only little girls. But if he married the elder to William, a different situation would be created. This would be a Protestant combination that would appeal to the bishops, to the Anglican royalists, and all those who had proved loyal to the throne in the past. It would be bound to create a division in the enemy coalition. And a division meant time; time for the Duchess of York to produce a living son. If only she could do this, the dynasty was saved.

There were practical difficulties, of course. Louis would be very angry. A great relative is always scornful of the shifts of a needy one, but he might induce his nephew William to agree to peace, then he could pretend he was pushed into the marriage by Danby and the high Churchmen.

There is no record of what Shaftesbury said when he heard, in the autumn, that William of Orange was come to England, to wed the Lady Mary. He was closely confined and could not have had much solace but books and his thoughts. He would have needed all the consolation they could give.

November is a shabby month at best, and this one was distinguished for cold, dripping fogs. Through a window of the palace – not one of the great public windows, but one of the smaller ones revealed only to the narrow, vault-like court – could be seen the faces of the King and his brother in bitter dispute.

The Duke of York was consumed by both dread and fury. He regarded his nephew, William as a rival and an enemy, and this marriage as a political disaster. For himself he would, without compunction, have sent his fifteen-year-old daughter to marry a French prince. But his brother insisted on the Dutch marriage and would not explain himself further, except to say it must take place. So the Duke of York summoned his daughter from her nursery at Richmond, and told her of her fate in the harshest terms. She was to go abroad with an unpleasant husband and live there for ever. Not unnaturally, the child had hysterics.

The prospective bridegroom was also a prey to unpleasant conflicts. He had now lived through five winters of plotting and contriving, five summers of bitter fighting, when the names of towns assumed a transient, agonising significance. This year it was Valenciennes, Cambrai, Cassel, St Omer. St Omer cut deepest.

While the marriage feasts were prepared, the whole of the Spanish Netherlands lay defenceless. This knowledge tortured him, as did the thought that the marriage itself would arouse misgivings and weakness not only among his allies, but in the Netherlands. In Amsterdam they would say with a sneer that he was a Stuart after all, that he would sell his allies for a wife.

This he would never do. In vain did his Uncle Charles explain that in the course of a lifetime a prince had many allies but only one wife. He refused to make peace on French terms. And when Charles tried a tentative threat—no peace, no wife, he was still unmoved. *He* could bear it if the wedding did not take place, but the King might find it very inconvenient. On many points, uncle and nephew understood each other, only too well. So the converging streams of interest narrow to form a final picture: a picture of a royal wedding.

The principal figure is the King. Fatigued, but gay, he suffers the exhaustion of one who has brought off miracles of tactful subterfuge, and now finds relief from nervous tension in jokes suitable to the occasion. The wretched bride, stupefied by misery, is urged to breed as fast as she can, for her nineteen-year-old stepmother is great with child, and if she is delivered of a son the bridegroom will have married her to no purpose. There is Lord Danby whose triumph this is; but the price of success includes an undesired acquaintance with that little Bluebeard's closet, to whose secrets the King has admitted him with such alarming negligence. Here, like little corpses, hang the records of French agreements and subsidies, and in sharing the royal counsels he is also forced to share the royal responsibility.

The bride's father is full of sour and busy thoughts. He, at least, can choose his daughter's household, and surround her with women devoted to his interest and chaplains who will be thorns in the flesh of the Calvinist husband. Chimeras of her ultimate conversion and divorce hover in his mind, even as he wonders which of the women he can really trust. 'Beggarly young bitches looking for Dutch husbands.'

Then there are the Dutch. In their minds they contrast Whitehall with the banquets given to the happy pair by the City of London, where not only the wealth, but the cleanliness, was impressive. Not

that Dutch noblemen could view these English counterparts of *Messieurs d'Amsterdam* with complete approval, but it was obvious they sincerely supported the marriage. The Guildhall displayed sense and virtue, whereas the courtiers who spoke French with a bad accent, and thought a season's campaigning the height of *chic*, were, in the exact sense of the words, provincial, ignorant and unimportant.

This is certainly the opinion of the bridegroom. His is a solitary figure, eluding the definitions of prig or hero, and frail and unhealthy as he is, there is a look of potency in the hazel eyes. Disliking all his relatives, impatient to get home, he uses symbols of endurance as an anodyne for pain. Last year he had written to the Grand Pensionary, Gaspard Fagel: 'I did this morning see a poor old man tugging alone in a little boat, with his goods against the eddy of a sluice, upon a canal, when, with the last endeavours he just got up to the place intended, the force of the eddy carried him quite back again; but he turned his boat as soon as he could and fell to his oars again, and thus three or four times, while I saw him. This old man's business and mine are too like one another. I ought, however, to do just as the old man, without knowing what will succeed any more than what did succeed in the poor man's case, I must go on and make my fortune.'

He was taking it now, with the ruby ring he put on his little cousin's finger.

SIX

THE CAMPAIGN IN THE COUNTRY

I

BY ONE of those odd coincidences which give a cast of irony to the future, the symbolism of the poor old man tugging alone in a little boat was more applicable to a person other than the Prince of Orange.

To find him, it is necessary to retrace our steps through paths carpeted with the refuse of nearly thirty years; far back, to that October at Putney, where at the Quarter-Master General's the heads of the army are debating and Buffcoate stands listening by the window. We never know his name or quite see his face, for he stands against the light, and though he speaks to the point, he is overshadowed by his superiors. There are always figures like his at public meetings: people in the background whose faces are only seen in a glimpse here and there, picked out from the shadow; but the weight of their mute support creates the pressure which the speakers need to make their telling points explosive. After everyone has spoken, they vote and go away.

When the time comes to leave the Quarter-Master General's and return to their regiments, it is more necessary to follow the subsequent history of Buffcoate than the careers of the more spectacular officers, for he represents the regiments themselves, the solid mass of Independents, whose yearning and ambitions have been momentarily crystallised in the programme called *The Agreement of the People*.

He went away thinking he had won his point, and it was not till two years later that he began to see this was not the case. Even then it was not a final disillusionment, but rather a souring and a postponement, a gradual recognition of the gulf in interests that separated him from his former champions. Like the man in the boat, he had nearly got to the place intended, when the eddy carried him back.

What happened to this representative of the rank and file of the army is of vital importance, for if we do not discover it, the history of the subsequent years is a confusion without a centre.

He had come into the army, the son of a small freeholder, or of a tradesman or mechanic in London, or a provincial town, and now found himself some years later, unique in the history of the world: a soldier citizen, master of a new technique and conscious of it. He was a man with convictions as strong as the steel of his cuirass, and an immense sense of accomplishment dividing him not only from his enemies, but from his own past. With his gauntleted fist he had struck the descendant of the Conqueror from his seat on the White Horse of Saxon England. He had seized the rein and turned her head to another future. All this he had accomplished as part of the army in the days of its power, before it split into groups of disappointed men taking divergent paths.

Some of the soldiers, shrewd or lucky, or merely with a keen eye for the main chance, succeeded by the purchase of debentures and other devices, in becoming rural capitalists and having acquired their land, they settled down in their respective counties to administer it, which they usually did with considerable ability. A good many more, seeing no possibility of acquiring wealth in England, went to Ireland and wrenched or bought land from the native owners—and the fact that these owners were Roman Catholics eased many a tender conscience. Others went to sea with Blake, or took service in the Netherlands. The Dutch service, though in a sense exile, provided a good Republican atmosphere which did not require any grim abandonment of a man's beliefs. All through the coming years, the English officers in the Netherlands service maintained a high record of fidelity to the Old Cause.

When these groups have been accounted for, there still remained the main body of the army, those who did not succeed in becoming landowners, at home or even in Ireland, nor sought exile with an adventurer's spirit. Disbanded, they went back to their trade, or their village; the buff coat was put away in an oak chest, or worn out in the course of civil life, the cuirass and sword hung up; but of their experience they could not divest themselves. True, they were unpopular with the nation and disillusioned of the future; the Good Old Cause, instead of shining like a beacon to the oppressed,

was being hustled away with as little ceremony as a pauper's coffin. Yet they themselves were not submissive or beaten and neither the restored King nor the Royalist majority in Parliament ever made the mistake of thinking they were. The Government proceeded on the tacit assumption that they existed, were dangerous and might once again join battle.

The more we stare at this ancient picture, the more clearly do we discern the facts through the respectable coats of varnish. The Civil War is not entirely over, the restoration of the King is not precisely a peace, and underneath various concealments the old conflicts are still smouldering.

Buffcoate then, is a disbanded soldier, somewhere between thirty and forty, returning to his native meadows. Or perhaps he rode to Bristol, or stayed in London, going back to his trade or craft, selling or making. But whatever he did, one thing is certain: he found himself in a parish.

England was divided into about nine thousand parishes and there was no possibility of escaping their legal confines, for where one ended, another began. It was the unit of government which had evolved out of the decay of the feudal manorial court. The Manor and the Church were still its seats of power, but the power itself now flowed from the central government. Some parishes were small with only a few inhabitants, some were so large, particularly in towns, that they had several thousand inhabitants, but all were cast in a similar form.

The appearance of rural England was already deceptive, for the decay of feudalism meant the passing of those obvious realities which were to be seen in other countries: the strip cultivation and the vast estate, which revealed to any observant eye the state of agrarian relations. The existence of the yeomanry and the piecemeal development of enclosures, gave every thing a softer look. The meadow falls gently to a brook, the crops push against a hedge quilted with honeysuckle, and through the trees the square Norman tower of the church has a gentle and nostalgic air. In one sense all this was reality, in another a subtle lie.

The parish, of which the church was the pictorial centre, did not exist to provide service for the inhabitants, but to enforce obedience to the government and to preserve the form of society

then in existence. This function it performed with that mixture of cunning and efficiency, hypocrisy and sense, which appears in our most flourishing periods to be the hall-mark of the English ruling classes.

The parish council bore the ecclesiastical name of the vestry and was presided over by the rector. It consisted of various unpaid officers; churchwardens, overseers of the poor, the constable and surveyor of the high roads. These officers were nominated annually by the ratepayers and their appointment confirmed by the justice of the peace. Their functions were to see the various communal necessities, such as the repair of roads, were attended to, to assess for rates, and above all to see that the law of parochial settlement was enforced; that labourers, estimated at about two-thirds of the population in every parish, were prevented from straying beyond the parish boundaries, and to punish at whipping post and stocks those runaway 'foreigners' caught slinking through lanes and ditches bent on the nefarious task of selling their labour elsewhere.

The key to the good life was undoubtedly the privilege of paying rates. In town and country, from Cornwall to the cities of the north, to be assessed for rates meant crossing the line from effectual slavery to comparative liberty. The qualification of owning land or dwelling, or holding a lease for life on property of forty shillings a year, conferred the right to vote at vestry meetings, which meant participating in such local government as there was, and eventually the other rare but tremendous right, of electing a member to Parliament.

A powerful safeguard against local government by majority vote existed in the person of the justice of the peace. Just as the parish, or a group of parishes, lay within the manor of the squire, so the squire himself was normally a justice and, as such, not only administered the law by himself on petty matters—he could, for instance, overrule vestry decisions or change the officers appointed to it—but at quarter sessions, in company with other magistrates, could try graver issues which carried such penalties as transportation for life. He was responsible solely to the Privy Council and the Privy Council was chosen by the King. The justice was thus the linchpin of the government of England, and his qualifications

for office were substantial landed property, the ability to read and write (after a fashion) and some knowledge of Latin.

So the returned soldier found himself once more in one of these little realms, sinking into the waters of enclosing custom, as an old sword tossed into the village pond might sink beneath the chickweed.

As yeoman, innkeeper or small tradesman, Buffcoate was a ratepayer; many, if not most, of his neighbours were Dissenters and had been, though with declining enthusiasm, for the Commonwealth. Perhaps the squire was a late Parliament man and the rector a Presbyterian. At first it might seem as if the King's return had made no difference to what was now an established pattern of life, but in the course of two or three years, without anyone being precisely aware of when it happened, everything imperceptibly changed. The unresolved years had crystallised into a new epoch.

Now the betrayal was clear. The Bishops were restored to the House of Lords and a whole body of Statutes created which were intended to wipe out once and for all the whole growth of dissenting thought. Every word to which Buffcoate had listened at Putney was now to be eliminated by decree. This was the settlement to which Monk had led his former comrades

Five years before it would have been resisted with vigour and possibly success, but this was a bad time for Commonwealth men. They were disunited, burdened with a sense of already being historic figures, while the world of their enemies turned to the future. No plan of concerted action presented itself, for none of the new forces were yet understood.

The Puritan minister was ejected from the Norman church and forbidden ever again to come within five miles of it. He and his family, with their few belongings packed in a hired cart, would say their farewells, and off he would go, trusting in God to find a new living within some protecting town, or if all else failed, to work as a labourer on the land of a sympathetic farmer. Among these men, uprooted by a rash government, were some of enough ability and spirit to come to terms with their circumstances in a way the authorities had not foreseen. For instance, there was a young Scotsman deprived of his living in Kent. A man, he was to say on one occasion, is only 'a little enlivened dust and a puff of

precarious breath', and the challenging fascination of that word 'precarious' already outweighed for him the advantages of settled life. Leaving his devoted but low-spirited wife, Hannah, to pack up their belongings, he set out for London, where he was to teach classics in Islington and gather an illegal congregation. His name was Robert Ferguson.

Anglican incumbents were now installed in the vacant parishes and presided over the vestry meetings. The inhabitants were expected to conform, and they could be prosecuted if they slipped away to field or barn to hear their own minister preach or pray. Indeed, the intention of the Statute was clear enough: through the Church's rituals and formulae the people were to be shepherded back to that obedience to God and King, to the old status of childhood, which, with its cycles of punishment and comfort, was designed to keep them safely on their knees before the temporal and spiritual power.

The ex-Presbyterian landlord occupied the squire's pew without a qualm. 'All wise men are of the same religion', and this maxim of a conveniently growing agnosticism enabled him no doubt to effect a comfortable compromise between the necessity of the parishioners being submissive to law and order, and the claims of practical toleration, which suggested a wink or two at the private dissenting meeting.

However, there were those who, not having his overwhelming territorial reasons for conformity, did not share his spirit of compromise. A man like Buffcoate had a small stake in the community, either in land or in trade. He had a wife and children. If his neighbourhood was a predominantly dissenting one, he would, in fact, enjoy some freedom of conscience, but if the local justices were Royalists, a more difficult choice was before him.

In the towns, communities of Dissenters were able to maintain a growing life of their own; particularly was this so in the West Country, where cities such as Bristol and Taunton behaved almost as though they were sovereign states, but life in a rural parish must have brought a keen sense of isolation to the nonconformist heart. The very sameness of the days, compressed within the cycle of the seasons and the law of the squire, were a potent influence to fatalism. The friends and fierce debaters of the past were all too.

easily lost; one had gone to Holland, another to Ireland and some were heard of at second or third hand in employments which made them remote from every memory. Many vanished altogether. What, for instance, had happened to the digger, Gerrard Winstanley, who had written so confidently that the old world was running up like parchment in the fire? Perhaps it had, but the ashes had fallen again into a sad and bitter pattern.

One of the most necessary parts of any movement of resistance is information. Without news and the stimulation of knowing that opinions are shared, it is easy for all but the most resolute to succumb to a sense of futility. It was, of course, to the interest of the Government to see that this was precisely what occurred, that no trace remained of any seditious organisation. In this they failed.

Far away in London a heart was beating. It was a faithful beat, sometimes fluctuating but never silenced—the beat of a heart that would never give up however prolonged the crisis. But its compass was very small—in the early sixteen-sixties, it did not comprise more than a few dozen men and women living in back rooms in a small area of the City by the river. They were poor people of the small trading class, without more education than was necessary to read and write, to set a press, print, and in some fashion to correct proofs. Yet it is not an exaggeration to say that through a critical period these few devoted people kept alive the revolutionary movement in England. Through them its organisation was preserved.

II

At the Restoration the business of printing and selling books or news-sheets was still in a state of infant complexity, and its relationship to the government remained largely undefined and regulated by statute which covered certain, but not all, aspects of the increasingly important trade. Naturally, no such idealistic conception as 'the freedom of the press' had ever occurred to the government of the day, either before or after the Restoration, and indeed freedom in this new and fast-developing facet of life would have been totally at variance with the rest of the country's institutions. It was the unqualified opinion of both Cromwellian and Caroline governments that printing 'hath been a pestilent midwife to those two accursed brats Error in the Church and Sedition in the State', and

after a short period of anarchic confusion during the Civil War, when everyone who could think or write – and it was astonishing how many of these there proved to be – rushed into pamphlet form, Cromwell reinstituted the licensing of the press, his prime object being to suppress Leveller writings. This campaign was carried out with all the General's experienced thoroughness, though not with unqualified success. The reason for this lay in one of the most striking characteristics of the last decade of the protracted struggle in England, the emergence of a more educated and politically conscious lower middle class. Buffcoate and his brothers during their time in the army had been taught to read and write and above all to debate and think, this was his true Revelation, the light of Grace which was to draw him like Faithful along new and conquering paths. Fortunately for him the technique of spreading thought was considered beneath the station of a gentleman, and the printing and distributing of books was firmly in the hands of the small trading class. Consequently, the close harmony that all through this period existed between Leveller writer, printer and hawker, was a natural one, the growth of a class with the same background and the same interests. In the angry term of the King's Surveyor of the Press, these were 'the Confederates'.

One of the first acts of the restored government was to try to frame some legislation for the press which, working through the rather peculiar and haphazard constitution of the trade, would be effective.

The most powerful and highly organised part of the book trade was the Stationer's Company. The Stationer's were, in general, booksellers and publishers, their Company possessed a charter which gave them certain privileges and, in return for this, they were supposed to occupy the position of trustees for the Crown. All the books on their lists had to be exhibited for inspection and could not be sold unless licensed by the correct authority – religious and philosophical works, fiction and poetry by the Archbishop of Canterbury or the Bishop of London, law books by the Lord Chancellor, and history, news and foreign affairs by one of the principal Secretaries of State.

By the Licensing Act of 1662 it was decreed that no work might be sold which was contrary to the doctrine or discipline of the Church of England or subversive to the King's royal estate. The

definition of what was subversive still followed very closely the old Stuart doctrine of monarchy as a divine institution. For instance, it was illegal to say that the execution of Charles I was justified, that the King is one of three estates, or that the King's person, as distinct from his authority, may be resisted. Anyone caught producing or selling an unlicensed book could be prosecuted and tried by common law.

And the teeth of this act was the right of search without warrant, conferred on officers of the Crown.

Unfortunately the Crown had not only to silence the rebellion of idealistic hearts, but to stifle an even more powerful incentive to seditious printing—the profit motive in the hearts of the Stationers. For the unpleasant truth remained, that subversive literature was exceedingly popular and while the righteous works, bearing the imprimatur of the most exalted spiritual peers, lay unopened upon the booksellers' tables, little illicit volumes, hid in a dark corner, sold like hot cakes.

The unpalatable fact had to be faced that the advantage of popularity lay with the enemies of the Church and Crown, and that it was inherently difficult to change the balance. The passionate love of debating ideas, which drove the pens of seditious writers, made them interesting to read, if only for the pleasure of disagreeing with them. The Royalists, on the other hand, disapproved of theoretical debate as opening the door to heresy, and the same restriction applied to news. Everyone wanted to know what was going on in the councils of the great, and as long as the gossip was juicy, not many cared if it was accurate. Official journalism received little encouragement, for the reason that news, however true, was considered dangerous if publicly circulated.

As Sir Roger l'Estrange wrote with commendable frankness when taking over the official Newsbook in '63: 'A public mercury should never have my vote, because I think it makes the multitude too familiar with the actions and counsels of their superiors, too pragmatical and censorious, and gives them not only an itch but a kind of colourable right and license to be meddling with the Government.'

The case could not have been more succinctly put, and the

public, abetted by the booksellers, returned a secret but unfavourable verdict. The newsbooks were not read.

However, if l'Estrange did not claim to be considered a propagator of information, he certainly had formidable powers in the opposite direction. An able man, in a perpetual state of humourless and psychological anger, he organised his police force with care, gave excellent advice to the King on further Press legislation, and created a network of spies and informers whose job it was to hound out the illegal works and their creators. Their quarry were the printers.

The printers were indeed in the most unfortunate position. The writer, as a single individual, anonymous and slippery, was hard to catch, the Stationer had wealth, respectability and dozens of excuses for the wares that soon passed through his hands; but the printer, with his stabilised machinery, and the hours, even days, he was forced to expend on printing the sheets, gave the law many opportunities to catch him red-handed. Government spies were on the look-out for the narrow crack of light in the small hours, which showed they were 'at it as hard as they could drive' and when entrance was forced, there were the wet presses, the hastily broken composition, the damning sheets. Furthermore, the 'mean' social position of the printers made it difficult for them to pay the fines.

The chief seditious printers, the 'Confederates', were Chapman, Brewster, Dover, Frank Smith, Creak and Twynne, Calvert and his wife Elizabeth.

None of them were dramatic revolutionary figures in the way that Major Wildman or Robert Ferguson were to be, or some others of the political 'plotters'. Possibly they were not even very clever. But they knew the gutters and backyards of courage as well as its public scaffold, and with one or two exceptions they were faithful throughout their lives; lives which were often ended abruptly, almost casually, by the Law.

They did not even have the satisfaction of publicly defending their beliefs. Treason was defined by the Crown and the only grounds on which the prisoner was allowed to defend himself were: had he, or had he not, printed or written the matter referred to in the charge? Hence the desperate and pathetic quibbling of prisoner and witnesses on points that deceived no one, the unrestrained

ferocity of the prosecution and the unctuousness of the judge (except in cases where the verdict was in doubt), with his hollow prayer of, 'God send you deliverance'.

This was how Twynne met his end. He had been caught red-handed printing a work which said that the King was no more than one of the three estates. In spite of captivity, of being 'only a poor man with three little children', he went to his terrible death of hanging, drawing and quartering without revealing the author of the work for which he was sentenced. 'It was not', he said, 'his principle to betray the author, for better one to suffer than many.' He was soon followed by others. All, with the exception of Frank Smith, died in prison or in the most extreme poverty, 'not able to leave at their death so much as to buy a poor three shilling coffin'. Many were buried at Bedlam, with lunatics and murderers.

From time to time people must have wondered what upheld these men and women in their long, dogged struggle. They did not belong to any great unified party, they had no leaders, and they did not all share the same belief. One or two of them may have been fanatics or mystics, but the majority were not upheld by any exaggerated idealism. They seem to have had no formulated political ambitions, and in the early sixteen-sixties no justification for the hope that any of their varied beliefs would be recognised by their countrymen. 'But why? What is it for?' must have echoed in dismay from the mouths of parents or friends, and it would have been hard to return a convincing reply.

It was for the Old Cause . . . for 'that Old Cause in which', as Sidney was to proclaim from the scaffold, 'I was from my youth engaged and for which Thou has often wonderfully declared thyself'. Even lying in the airless dark of a prison, it would be difficult to frame a precise definition.

The first really important achievement of the Confederates was the printing of the dying speeches of the Regicides, the men who had signed the death warrant of Charles I.

These men, though not necessarily the most sincere or determined exponents of the Old Cause, must, by the very nature of their arrests, trials and executions, have appeared to the English people as embodying everything the Commonwealth had stood for. On the scaffold the law permitted them to make a last speech, but it

would be difficult – or could be made difficult – for anyone to hear what they said, and the Government forbade these speeches to be printed. Clearly it was important for the mass of people to know how they died, if they had recanted their beliefs or affirmed them. A trumpet call from the scaffold could make a deep impression.

Calvert, who had undertaken the printing of the speeches, was arrested on another charge, but while he lay in prison, his wife Elizabeth, though she knew it might mean her husband's life, went ahead with the edition. She printed six thousand copies. This was a very large number indeed, when the size of the population and the prevalence of illiteracy is considered, a figure comparable to about fifty thousand in our day. However, the work of printing was only the first part of the business, the equally important matter of distribution remained. To insinuate copies into the London booksellers was by no means enough, for it was essential to get the book distributed in the provincial towns and the countryside. For this purpose Elizabeth and her allies became hawkers. The copies were hidden on pack mules or in journcymen's carts, under the usual hawker's merchandise, and thus disguised made the long journey to Bristol and Taunton, to York and Hull, Gloucester and Dover, where on fair day they were disposed of before the dew was off the grass.

The successful printing and dispersal of this work was a victory for the Confederates and brought upon them the renewed fury of the government.

However, in the course of nature not every year produces a prodigy. Masterpieces did not often come their way, and few of their productions were written by Baxter or Marvell. Month after month, they risked all they had in producing little works of no literary merit, sometimes containing hazy or mediocre ideas. To men of education many of them really did seem despicable, the productions of 'mean' persons. 'Murder will out', wrote l'Estrange, no doubt in genuine disgust, 'a villainous thing scattered at York, a little unlicensed Quaking book.'

Sometimes they wrote these works themselves. Benjamin Keache, a Bedfordshire schoolteacher and minister, for instance, was caught red-handed with numerous copies of his own *Child's Primer* upon his premises.

There is a pathetic simplicity in the way disaster came to the Keache household. Benjamin had written and printed his book, and while it was still on the premises, a government spy walked into the house and asked his wife if she had a copy, and she in the most trusting way gave him one. That was all.

Keache was arrested, and after a painful period of waiting was produced for trial at the Assizes. To the prisoner's eyes the court room must have taken on the likeness of a Roman arena, with the chief beast of prey dressed in the robes of justice, while he, the helpless and frightened Christian, the author of this *Child's Primer*, waited exposed and defenceless for what was to come. As all the details of the scene take on their astonishing vividness, we see that justice, in the philosophic sense of that term, was never intended to play a part in a political trial. The judge was not there to try the prisoner, but to administer the law.

Keache was ordered to plead before he had a copy of the indictment, and when he opened his mouth to protest, the judge interrupted: 'You shall not preach here, nor give the reason of your damnable doctrine, to seduce and infect his Majesty's subjects. These are not things for such as you to meddle with and to pretend to write books of divinity: but I will try you for it before I sleep.'

The prisoner pleaded not guilty.

The indictment was very long and it must have been difficult for the prisoner, listening in strained attention, to catch the points of law involved. A copy was then given to him and he was told he might have an hour in which to study it and decide upon his defence.

Could he learn Chinese in an hour and defend himself in that language? He had written in his little book that children should not be baptised and that laymen might preach the gospel. And of Christ's true ministers: 'Not many mighty and noble saith Paul, are called, but rather the poor and the despised, tradesmen and such like; they do not preach for gain and filthy lucre. They are not like the false teachers who look for gain from their quarter; who eat the fat and clothe themselves with the wool.'

These heresies were included in the indictment and he was prepared, indeed eager, to defend them, to assert publicly the rights of mean people to educate their children and preach their opinions

to the unconverted in competition with the gentry and the great ones. This he was not allowed to do. His defence must be a factual one of whether he had, or had not, written the book – or based on legal technicalities of which he knew nothing.

He seems to have realised that the allotted hour was useless, and without waiting, began his defence with what indeed was his only hope: a bold and illicit attempt to defend his opinions.

‘As to the doctrines——’

These four words he succeeded in speaking before the judge stopped him. ‘You shall not speak here except to the matter of fact: that is to say whether you writ this book or not.’

‘I desire liberty to speak to the particulars of my indictment, and those things that have——’

‘You shall not be suffered to give the reasons for your damnable doctrine here, to seduce the King’s subjects.’

To which Keache replied: ‘Is my religion so bad that I may not be allowed to speak?’

Evidently, he did succeed in making an impression on the jury, for they showed some reluctance in returning the expected verdict. Indeed, it was necessary for the judge to descend from the bench and soundly shake one of them before they could be brought to agreement, and then it was not unqualified.

Keache was sentenced to imprisonment, to the pillory, where he must watch a bonfire of his book, and to a heavy fine. It was further demanded that he should publicly renounce his beliefs.

He answered: ‘I hope I shall never renounce those truths which I have written in that Book.’

The scandalised clerk tried to draw the judge’s attention. ‘My lord, he says he hopes he shall never repent.’

‘But the Judge taking no notice, the gaoler took him away.’

Keache was luckier than Calvert or Brewster, both of whom died in wretched circumstances, for he was still preaching and writing in the sixteen-eighties.

The Government scored their victories, but they never succeeded in stopping the secret flow of sedition. Calvert and Brewster were hounded to death, but their widows continued with the work. In a felicitous phrase l’Estrange once described the illegal press as, ‘the feminine part of revolt’. This was truer than he perhaps realised.

and the women, who had no doubt been brought up in a Levelling philosophy, played a leading part in this dangerous work.

What was Elizabeth Calvert like? Posterity is tolerably familiar with the faces of much lesser women. We can imagine Lady Castlemaine in a pet or Frances Stuart posing as Britannia, but the figure of the woman who came to that decision to print the Regicides' speeches while her husband lay in prison, is turned from us in oblivion. We shall not meet her face glancing at us sidelong from the numerous *portraits de parade*, or glimpse her likeness in the figures that flit through the popular literature of the period: the amorous wife, the country frump or the intriguing maid. Neither does Lord Halifax mention this type of woman as a class into which, by any eventuality, his daughter might fall.

Perhaps it is in the pages of that other journalist, Defoe, that here and there we come across an experience that might have befallen women leading the sort of lives they must, of necessity, have lived. There might well be a point on road or inn where their paths crossed that of thieves and vagabonds, where the cataclysms of childbirth, death or love caught them unaware. Now and then a chance phrase in someone else's letter casts a vicarious illumination. 'My dearest dear', wrote the plotter Robert Ferguson to his wife, and for an instant we catch an oblique view of features pinched with anxiety in the light of a Newgate lantern or the distant, solitary figure with the pack mule lost against the moor; or again in a windowless chamber, see a woman setting type and coming wearily back to the kitchen to get dinner for the children.

In this way, in spite of many reverses, the work went on and even in the testimony of their enemies their success was conceded. 'You shall sometimes find a seditious libel to have passed through so many hands that it is at last scarce legible for dust and sweat, whilst the loyal answer stands in a gentleman's study as clean and neat as it came from the press.'

There could be no clearer admission as to which was the popular choice.

SEVEN

THE NEW COUNTRY PARTY

BY THE EARLY sixteen-seventies it was clear that ten years of kingly rule had not only produced a state of conscious alarm through definite political actions, but had given rise to a condition of indefinable anxiety among the small bourgeoisie. Trends over which no man seemed to have control were assuming a menacing aspect and behind the figure of the solitary man tugging at his oars, a huge sea was arising and threatening with its swell utterly to overwhelm his little craft

For ten years the tide of national wealth had been flowing in and its mysterious movements, always towards some unguessed destination, engulfed one by one the old landmarks 'A nation is only rich when it is richer than its neighbour', wrote John Locke some years later, but many a small producer had discovered that this economic law also applied to men. A man was only rich when he was richer than a hundred of his neighbours

The effects of that change in agrarian relations which had occurred as the result of the Civil War, were now beginning to be felt. For instance, the difference in the style of living and farming between Lord Shaftesbury's grandfather and a yeoman farmer was not so very great in spite of the difference in degree, but the estate now maturing at Wimbourne St Giles was far beyond the ambitions of any ordinary farmer. The wealth, which had been increased through judicious investment in trade, was now used for experiments in forestry and drainage which greatly added to the productivity of the land. Behind hedges and walls, 'foreigners' came to lay out plantations of trees, chestnuts and acorns soaked in milk before planting, orchards of cider apples, groves of mulberrys for silkworms and many other profitable innovations in crops and livestock. Naturally, great estates like these did not exist in a vacuum. Just as they found various means of encroaching upon the common.

land, so they needed the labour of many men to enrich them, and again something like an irresistible fate appeared to be achieving this. Prices rose and made it more and more difficult for small men to weather a bad harvest or other misfortune; religious persecution added a further spur, and one of the most decisive facts of the age now became obvious to all; every year more men worked for wages.

This was the condition of rural life when the years of crisis began and the immense repercussions from foreign affairs created a startling allegorical picture: the figures passing down the country road – dissenting farmer, brewer, clothier, shopkeeper, hawker, were amazed to see the gates of the great park flung wide, not by the servants carrying out the broken meats from my lord's dinner to give to the indigent, but by the lord himself, who in the urgent tones of a comrade cried out: 'Are you with me? If England is to be saved we must unite together for the cause of liberty, the Protestant religion and a new Parliament!'

One of the areas in which this call to arms was most effective was that region, comprising Somerset, Wiltshire, Dorset and parts of Hampshire and Devon, which was called the West Country. During his days as Lord Chancellor, Shaftesbury had sat upon the wool-sack – with more symbolism than was suspected at the time, for wool and the West were one stuff, and from it was now to be fashioned the most advanced organisation of its day: the New Country Party.

It is impossible to consider or follow the history of what, in due course, was to become the Whig party without recognising the leading part played in its development by the West. The facts of geography can be deceptive and the modern eye, roving over the map of England, unconsciously assigns the seat of power to the north and midlands. But in the seventeenth century the inward vision would survey the outline differently; it was southern England which still produced the wealth and which was consequently the centre of gravity of the nation. And if London was Britannia's heart, the West was her lungs.

The long-maturing riches of this region – the woollen manufacture which was recognised as 'the principal foundation upon which the foreign commerce of this Kingdom moveth', the corn, the trade that flowed through Bristol – had produced a state of

social development in advance of any other part of the country, almost a nation within a nation which, like all mature things, was already touched with the seeds of change and decay. The woollen trade with its various subsidiaries was far advanced in capitalist relations, and the numerous workers engaged in it, weavers, cloth finishers, combers, dyers, felt an increasing sense of insecurity. The recurrent depressions in the trade, with their seasons of unemployment, left these people, who had no possessions and no alternative means of livelihood, in the greatest misery and want. The disruption in the export trade brought about by the war against the Dutch, and the competition of cheaper and coarser cloth from other areas, were now having serious repercussions. Shadows were also gathering round other Western industries. The productivity of the Mendip mines—a rich source of lead—fell sharply in the later sixteen-seventies, and there also seems to have been an unusual amount of unemployment among agricultural labourers. Economic distress in one way or another was thus being felt almost universally throughout this region, from the small farmer class downwards, and this unifying force was given impetus by the persecution of Dissenters.

It is at this point, in trying to define the social content of religious nonconformity, that a most interesting question arises: who and what, was a dissenting minister? As a result of the Clarendon code, he was not a priest imposed by an extraneous authority, drawing his living from his religious functions, but a man working at some trade or craft who would not, in the nature of things, be a minister at all unless he were accepted as such by a congregation—that is to say, by a body of his fellow men. The whole question of the acceptance of the minister by the congregation is one of great significance. The illegal gathering, come to hear him preach, the collection of money from people who earned only a few shillings a week, to enable him to travel and visit other congregations—amongst some of the sects a great deal of exchanging of ministers went on—would plainly require that the minister should not only have rhetorical gifts, but that he should be trusted as a wise guide and counsellor; in fact, as a representative of his flock. The rudiments of associations among the wage earners were already in being: collections of money were made against the seasons of

unemployment and occasionally they would band together to enforce their demands on the question of wages, so that it is a fair supposition that the more advanced organisation of the dissenters occasionally performed a complementary function.

The ministers themselves, though much they said was phrased in religious terminology, were actively concerned with social and political problems. A very high proportion of the militant revolutionary figures of this period were nonconformist ministers, and it is quite evident that men like Ferguson and Nelthorpe enjoyed the support of their conventicles and were, indeed, partially maintained by them throughout their political careers. Their power by no means resided only in their individual ability as theorists or writers, but in the even more significant fact that they were known as the trusted representatives of large groups of the lower middle and prosperous artisan classes. When Ferguson speaks or writes – as he not infrequently does – of ‘friends in Wapping’, he is really referring to what actually amounted to a well-organised political constituency. In after years, when Shaftesbury talked of getting ten thousand men out in the City, and when the West rose in ’85, it was on the ministers that the leaders relied to get the men prepared, armed, and into the field. It was on the ministers’ advice and information as to what ‘the temper of the people’ was, that they based their action. In themselves the least sinister of men, personally poor, living with simplicity, only ambitious for their cause and their countrymen, no class were so feared by the royalists. To the eyes of authority, a devil with horns, even a Jesuit with a dagger, was preferable to the seditious preacher who possessed nothing but the coat on his back and the education to which he had no right. Standing in time somewhere between the agitator of the past, who had been elected by his comrades in the New Model, and the workers’ representative of the future, but still drawing his authority from the Bible and more and more concerned with the needs of temporal and political life, the dissenting minister was to perform a unique function in the history of the New Country Party. And it is surely relevant that the region where he was strongest and his influence the most felt – namely the West – was also where the class antagonisms of a society feeling the first breaths of economic decline, were beginning to create new alignments.

By 1678, men of the finest estate were publicly declaring for the Protestant religion and welcoming the assistance of all freeholders in the agitation for a new Parliament. From noblemen like Russell, Cavendish, Lovelace and Delamere, to the squires of the West the Thynnes, Stiodes, Spekes, Pridcauxs, Trenchards – all were busy organising petitions and inflaming the countryside. No longer were Dissenters universally persecuted or the educated dispossessed without employment. Those threads of independence and rebellion so perilously kept alive, were woven almost overnight into a masterpiece of organisation

It was very simple. That is the keynote to the success of the New Country Party, for all the elements of a revolutionary party were in being. There was the hard core, tested by every kind of adversity, of those who wished for a real social change. Years of suppression had toughened their convictions, created the bones of an underground organisation, and sharpened the powers and the cunning of their leaders. Meeting them now, at this point of conflux, were the other party of the squires and city capitalists, enormously improved in wealth and confidence and led by a man of great talent who saw that for the moment their interests were identical. Both factions stood upon the broad platform of popular prejudices – the terror of Popery and tyranny, which attracted into their orbit masses of non-political people of all classes, both were agreed on an immediate objective – a new Parliament elected by the freeholder. No wonder the luck ran with them – the dice were loaded and again and again the winning combination was thrown.

It may be imagined that the veterans of the Old Cause did not respond without reservations to their new allies. The hearty declaration of the squire that he no longer supported the King's government, and the flattery of the lords, who now saluted the tradesmen of the cities, could not entirely have removed a core of scepticism. At the same time, they would have seen the advantage, indeed the necessity, of the alliance, and believed it to be not altogether unequal. If the wealth and influence belonged to the new recruits, the brains and the practical experience were theirs. It was by no means certain they would play Jonah to the golden whale.

In London, somewhere about 1675, it became the convenient

habit of Shaftesbury and his friends to meet in a tavern called the King's Head, which stood like an outpost on the edge of the city. Here, behind a double tier of balconies, they met in an upstairs room, safe from surprise and interference, and as the party grew, so did this headquarters of what was now called The Green Ribbon Club take on the characteristics we associate with the Jacobin clubs of a hundred and fifty years later. It was not precisely a social club, a newspaper office, a committee room, a secretariat, an information bureau or a place of refreshment, but something of all these.

There was a constant coming and going, an atmosphere pulsating with 'news', which crystallised into ideas and plans; an incessant act of transformation which began with agents from the country and spies from the court bringing information. This was discussed upstairs by the party leaders, who came to decisions on tactics and gave directives to the clever writers hanging about below, who in turn produced innumerable articles and satires which were printed and distributed at an ever-increasing rate.

Here personalities brushed against each other in an atmosphere of democracy – the only privilege Shaftesbury enjoyed was a seat by the fire in winter – and innumerable jokes, jealousies, friendships engendered that atmosphere of purpose, excitement and collective ambition which creates a flashing happiness like the happiness of love. The young and the poor had most to gain, for here wit was master and brains were wealth, and nothing less than the transforming of England was the work to be done.

The Leveller green, stuck in a hat worn at the defiant angle which came to be known as the 'Monmouth cock', had a genuine equalitarian significance. This was a necessity; for the men who leaned on the balconies smoking clay pipes and exchanging repartee with people in the street, were of many different kinds. Of the nobility who patronised the premises there were a few showy personalities, like the Duke of Buckingham, who had a certain advertising value, but little else – he had long been separated from both rent roll and tenantry – and what might be described as the working nobility; men such as Lord Russell, Lord Grey and Tom Thynne, who possessed very considerable fortunes and much influence in their counties. Their function was primarily to pay;

and when the long-expected election came, to organise. But the faction of which 'our little gentleman' Shaftesbury was the leader were representatives of the citizens of London and of the Western towns: merchants, ministers and other ubiquitous characters, such as Major Wildman and his brother-in-law Disney.

Wildman, like Robert Ferguson, was a 'plotter'; one who had chosen revolutionary politics as a career, but he had not the latter's stabilising connection with 'friends in Wapping'. Since those days in Putney when he had proved himself such a brilliant debater, he had suffered both prison and exile and knew the workings of all the current plots. He was reputed to be a Leveller, a Republican and an atheist.

Nathaniel Wade and John Ayloffe were of another generation: two of 'the younglings', who 'tasted of political administration and took themselves for notable counsellors'. The former was a Bristol man, the latter a Scotsman, distantly related to the Hydes; both had found their way to London and the practice of the law; no doubt they starved as well as many similar young men, till conviction led them into what was soon to become their true career. These were two of the most attractive recruits the Country Party made: both young, ardent, daring and determined.

Shaftesbury was the presiding genius of this coalition of forces; and though from time to time he disagreed with Russell and Essex, was cruel to Buckingham and sharp with Lord Grey, we never hear of any disagreement with his citizens. It was, in fact, the kind of alliance he understood best, and which drew from him those reserves of good temper and resolution which had marked the successful enterprises of his youth. He knew that these men represented popular support, and with what his enemies considered diabolical perspicacity he had devoted all his energies to its perfection as a weapon. It was waiting, a political Excalibur, for the day of fate.

The day came on 13th August 1678, when the King, taking a walk in St James's Park, was accosted by an unknown man who claimed to have discovered a Roman Catholic plot against His Majesty's life.

The great Popish Plot is one of those celebrated mysteries whose winding paths of truth and falsehood have never to this day yielded

up their secrets;¹ yet it is the details, more than the actual sequence of events, which are so complicated. The real Franco-Jesuit plot, of which the King and his brother were founders, had been discovered in its essentials by Shaftesbury four years before. What he had been waiting for, and chance now provided him with, was an opportunity publicly to prove at least part of the discovery, in a way that would convulse the nation. The grand conspiracy had gone on too long, had become known to too many people – particularly since the Duke of York had taken over from his brother the role of active generalissimo – for anything but the most sustained good fortune to preserve it from betrayal and inevitable exposure.

There is a certain grim suitability in the instrument chosen by fate for the discovery, for whatever Titus Oates may or may not have been, he was beyond doubt the son of an Anabaptist minister. As a matter of fact, too much has been made of his personally immoral character, for in spite of his lies and improvisations he was probably convinced that the substance of his story was true. His flights of fancy did not err so much through villainy as through poverty of imagination. It was not in the White Horse Inn that the Congress of Jesuits met, but in the apartments of the heir to the throne. A correspondence more full of deadly implications than that between the Jesuit Secretary Coleman and the French King's Confessor could be found in the Royal closet, and its supposed victim, the King, was in reality the Chief conspirator. The reality was darker than the fabrication.

A plot to kill the King: the King dare not deny this, and night and day he must have lived in terror of what might be discovered next, for if all the facts of the secret negotiations in which he and his brother had been engaged for over ten years came to light, it would be doubtful if the monarchy could be saved. Fortunately he had steady nerves in a crisis. He played his part, though his face was the colour of ashes, and agreed to everything the frenzy of Parliament demanded. No longer was the royal handkerchief tossed in the air at a mention of that assembly: he clung to Parliament as he clung to life. Dissolve the Commons, and the flood gates of revolution were opened.

¹ One of the most fascinating and interesting of investigations was carried out by Sir John Pollock in his *Papish Plot* (Cambridge University Press, 1944).

It was not specifically the Plot, however, which finally achieved the Dissolution. The sequence of events which brought about this had been long awaited and would have pleased even the most ironic. As Lord Halifax observed on another occasion 'There is no pleasanter sight than a knave caught in a net of his own making.'

For many years King Charles had been in the habit of treating his representative at the Court of Versailles—that is to say, the holder of the chief diplomatic office—as little more than an official post-boy. Probably through a desire to improve the occasion by exercising economy, he was accustomed to appoint as his ambassadors wealthy noblemen whose presence at home was not always convenient.

The present ambassador was Ralph Montague, a very rich man and a friend of Shaftesbury's. He had recently quarrelled with Danby, which was unlucky for the Court, for he had managed to get possession of some very damaging letters from Danby, countersigned by Charles, bargaining with Louis for an annual pension of six million livres, as a price for arranging peace terms with the Dutch.

Few diplomats in the long, frustrating history of English diplomacy can have found relief for their feelings in such a thoroughly brazen action as Montague now took. He sent the correspondence to the House of Commons.

The explosion which followed was not entirely out of control. The King still had a choice. Danby's life was threatened, but he might let Danby take his chance and refuse to dissolve—but if he did, Danby would defend himself with the postscript, 'this is writ by my order C R'. On the other hand, what Shaftesbury wanted was a dissolution, not Danby's head. If the King capitulated, there would be no need to use the counter-signature as a last weapon. Charles surrendered, and on 24th January 1679, Parliament was dissolved.

After five years of planning, waiting and manoeuvring the New Country Party had achieved its first major objective.

EIGHT

THE FIRST WHIG PARLIAMENT

IN THE seventeenth century there was, of course, no such thing as a strictly fair, or in the modern sense, 'free' general election. The ballot was not secret. What took place was a complicated 'free for all' among the ratepayers, a wild game of hunt the slipper, in which the Parliamentary Writ was passed from hand to hand, its passage to the sheriff delayed or concealed for the purpose of confusing the voter. The scales were heavily weighted in favour of the powerful landlord or big corporation, and every one of the five hundred odd members of the Commons was returned as the result of a contest in which the rules were vague and the strong and cunning minority often defeated the unorganised majority.

However, in the winter election of 1679 – the first that had been held for nineteen years – the ratepayers did not go to the poll unorganised.

Every yeoman – and included in the term were farmers eligible to vote – and every tradesman of the cities, fought their way to the poll in the absolute conviction that unless their candidates were elected to Parliament, catastrophe awaited Protestants and free men. When a spokesman of the Court urged that potent argument on the Kentish yeomen, that while they were voting the harvest would rot, they replied that they 'would rather trust God with their corn than trust the Devil to choose their Parliament men'.

The fact that none of these worthy yeomen were in actual danger of having their throats cut or their wives raped by foreign Jesuits, does not diminish the real cause of their fear. Nothing has an uglier look than reason when it is not on our side, and hysteria too is apt to resemble any strong feeling we do not share. The violent passion, stimulated and given expression by the political organisers of the New Country Party, was needed if the electorate were to have the resolution, and in some cases the actual physical endurance and

courage, necessary to win the election. Win it they did, and the House of Commons which, exhausted and triumphant, faced the King that February could claim to represent the English people more fully than any other Parliament in British history. Men drew comparisons with the Commons of '41, but this 'mighty roaring Parliament' possessed what no previous national assembly could boast: the recognised and active support of a large section of the wage-earning classes.

So the new Parliament had gathered in Westminster, and the Country Party which now probably had a slim majority in the Lords and a huge majority in the Commons, was full of hope and zeal for reformation. Their first act was to introduce a Bill to exclude Roman Catholics from the succession to the Crown.

On the face of it the Exclusion Bill was an instrument for excluding the Duke of York and leaving the succession to be decided as it was in the times of the Tudors – by the monarch's choice of a Protestant heir. In reality it implied far-reaching changes. The heir named would have to be approved by Parliament, which meant by the New Country Party, and it was not likely that approval would be given except on conditions entailing a restriction of the royal prerogative.

If the Duke of York was passed over, the next heir would presumably be his elder daughter Mary, now the wife of the Prince of Orange. Obviously this was a proposition to which the King could not, in reality, give his consent, for to do so would have meant first the enmity of Louis with all that this entailed, and second, a complete breach with his brother who, in these circumstances, would indubitably become the Franco-Catholic candidate in an eventual resort to arms.

However, the Dutch marriage was to be the King's salvation, and in these dark days he must have watched hopefully for every sign of secret friendship between opposition lords and the Court at the Hague. This was still a subterranean movement. William's friends in England had no party, no popular support, and at the headquarters of the New Country Party exclusion meant something else altogether.

The difference at the Green Ribbon Club was not so much between those who wanted a republic and those who thought a

limited monarchy more practical, but between those who wanted an aristocratic and exclusive oligarchy, such as there was in the United States of the Netherlands, and those who wanted a constitution based on a much wider and more democratic base than had ever hitherto existed in England. Those groups fell into more or less obvious class divisions; the men of large property and aristocratic position standing for the former, the leaders of the lower middle class and dissenting masses for the latter. A strong central force controlled by Shaftesbury, and consisting roughly of the Presbyterian sections of the city, for the moment held all together for the purposes of strategical unity. None of the divisions were harsh, and most men were busier planning victory than thinking of the form it should take.

A republic had a decisive and noble sound, but undeniably it presented difficulties: the present form of Parliament and the legislature would have to be considerably recast, and it would obviously be extremely difficult to come to agreement on this subject. On the other hand, a limited and controlled monarchy, in which the King functioned as a magistrate and all real powers remained in Commons and Lords, was a simpler and more practical solution.

No one had any reason to suppose that William, a foreign prince and a royal Stuart, would be the man for this role. From a practical point of view an Englishman already known to them, such as Monmouth, was unquestionably better. The very ambiguity of his position had certain unique advantages and he was prepared, so it was popularly believed, to be their candidate.

The opinion of the Duke of York, that his nephew had 'gott it into his head to drive things if he can to a republike, hoping then to make his self their generall and stadtholder as the Prince of Orange is in Holland', might well be his description of a constitutional monarchy. It is probable that neither Charles nor James saw any practical difference between a constitutional monarchy and a republic. Either would soon bring the country down 'to the dregs of a democracy'.

In this crisis of his affairs the King acted with prudence. He sent the Duke of York to Brussels and made a show of superseding the private discussions of his Cabinet by a Council in which the New

Country Party was strongly represented. All his gestures were conciliatory.

The Exclusion Bill passed its second reading.

Seeing that appeasement was of no avail, the King decided to try bold action. He prorogued Parliament and sent Monmouth to Scotland where the Covenanters were in armed revolt. While he was out of the way the King dissolved Parliament again. In the elections that were held, the New Country Party again swept the country. It was now more than ever apparent that a new situation existed; the electorate openly expected, and was indeed determined, that those men whom they had returned to Parliament should represent the Country Party and follow the directions of its leaders. Consequently the Court regarded the electorate with the most virulent animosity, almost as though it were a revolution in being. The idea that members of the Commons were delegates of the people, and not a closed corporation of knaves susceptible to royal persuasion, was an innovation which aroused indignant disgust. 'If a dog stood against a courtier they would elect the dog.'

All through the summer venom dripped from the King like blood. Monmouth returned from Scotland having pacified rather than suppressed the Covenanters. The King greeted him with a bitterness he could not conceal, saying there would have been no prisoners had he been there. And his son replied, sneer for sneer, 'I can't kill men in cold blood. That's work for butchers.' It must have seemed to the father that his son could afford such humane sentiments when the bells of London were pealing in honour of his bloodless victory and all opposition to his claims shrivelled in the blaze of his popularity.

In August the King fell ill. Probably his sudden sickness had a diplomatic origin, but it was not less critical for that. The question was now squarely posed to the country: who would succeed him if he died?

The mouths of the electorate were already opening to shout: 'Never the Duke of York!' but certain noble Protestant lords returned in private a softer reply: better the Duke of York than the electorate.

That 'old Roman' Lord Halifax, perceiving that the charm of moderation might be loved to extremes which a sensible man can-

not afford, took counsel with Lord Sunderland and Lord Essex, who had great difficulty in making up his mind. With the King's consent they secretly sent for the Duke of York. The Duke arrived to find his brother sufficiently recovered to prorogue the new Parliament till the following year, and during his convalescence at Windsor he disclosed some of his real feelings regarding Monmouth. The Duke of York noticed in triumph that his nephew had 'a sort of disorder and disturbed carriage'.

At one stroke the King relieved him of all his appointments and ordered him abroad. With his son effectively separated from the English mobs, he permitted his brother to go to Scotland. In this way justice was dispensed and the King's good recovery and equally good judgement duly celebrated.

Nothing, in fact, had changed. This was the astonishing fact that confronted the English. The tumult in the country, the years of planning, the selfless and courageous actions of ordinary people had found not the smallest reflection in the government of the country. The prorogued parliament at Westminster was a weapon the people could not use, a stillborn child brought to birth with immense difficulty.

These were the facts which faced Shaftesbury, as leader of the party, and which convinced him that its aims could not be attained by Parliamentary methods alone. It cannot be doubted that this was an unpalatable fact. He would have preferred the struggle to be won by men of the finest estate, without assistance from other classes, but seeing this assistance was necessary, he pursued it wholeheartedly. This advantage of daring, or resolution, was, according to his own class, his greatest crime, though to him it probably seemed a practical decision not involving any question of principle. The events of the last few months proved conclusively that in this struggle against the monarchy the best troops were not to be found in the House of Lords. He distrusted 'fanatics' and in normal times would approve of their suppression, but at the moment their zeal was irreplaceable. During the critical period of the King's illness it was not the leaders of the people who drew back wavering and afraid, but a handful of the most enlightened peers. It was plain which side merited trust and which was the target of a just scorn; and so with insidious power the experiences of action began to

remould his thoughts and carry him, courageous swimmer that he was, ever further on the leftward flowing tide.

It was in this spirit of encouraging not only the electorate, but the vast masses of the disenfranchised, that he organised that autumn the most extraordinary political pageant London had ever seen. It was essentially a new kind of warfare, aimed to reach hearts which were immune to oratory or the arguments of pamphlets. Owing something to the traditional pageantry of the Crown, it went much further, and created by a visual presentation of fears and passions a great polemical drama. London was the stage and its citizens the audience on the night of 17th November.

A vault of blue twilight opened at the top of Chancery Lane and from it came an extraordinary sound; a sound that gave the sensation of terror, so indefinable was its quality. It might have been a gust of autumn wind whistling over marshes or the rise and fall of pipes. In the unearthly silence of the street, set behind a corridor of candles, a thousand pairs of eyes were fixed in expectancy. A bell tolled harshly, a bell for the dead and a great brazen voice cried out: 'Remember Justice Godfrey! Remember Justice Godfrey!'

A tremor passed through the listeners as the voice came ringing down the street, a throb like a pulse beating faster. . . .

Now a solitary horse appeared bearing a stiff lank figure stained with blood; behind it, holding it erect, crouched the figure of a Jesuit. This was the great martyr of the Popish Plot and he rode as he was believed to have ridden on the night of his murder. The wind music that came down the hill shrilled with the common grief and indignation, while far in front echoed the bellman's mournful cry, 'Remember Justice Godfrey!'

Could anyone forget?

Now the eyes were fastened on the figures that came crowding behind, the figures of guilt, bearing banners like bat's wings, starred with affronting emblems; there were Jesuits with daggers, Popish bishops in purple, and seated high up in a wagon, a solitary figure. In the light of the torches its triple tiara shone with an infernal glitter and the face was sculptured with pits of darkness. It looked like a man, yet was horrible in its dissimilarity, the opaque eye sockets staring ahead with inhuman detachment, the body swaying

with the movements of the cart. It was the anti-Christ, the Romish Pope.

It was a nightmare that was created and every watcher was dreaming – a dream often dreamt since the days of Mary Tudor and one that always culminated in a fire. Flames waited now at the bottom of Chancery Lane and towards them progressed the Jesuits and the bishops, the devils and the Pope of Rome, all going downwards in the light of the links as their forefathers had gone in the past.

A real man going to his death would not have been so horrible, for he would have brought himself, his mortal individuality to the fire; but the wax Pope was an empty creature, a burning glass that intensified and reflected all the hatred and terror concentrated upon it. It was the great fear of a nation.

The procession moved with its tossing banners through the dark congestion of the crowds. As far as the eye could see there were heads, and from a distance came the deep roar of voices. To the triumphant watchers on the balconies of the Green Ribbon Club it must have seemed as if all London were summoned to the place that night.

It was the anniversary of Elizabeth Tudor's accession and three days past that of Rainborough's funeral.¹ The great fire must have cast its theatrical illumination over the faces of most of the party's leaders. There was the huge, rough face of Stephen College the carpenter, 'a man of more enlarged understanding than is commonly found in mechanics'. There was the tall, arched figure of Ferguson, seeming like a winged creature in the flickering light of the torches, the popular aristocratic figures of Wharton and Thynne, and Major Wildman's powerful visage. Somewhere surely in this throng were l'Estrange's particular enemies, the printers, 'the dirty little pug Henry Care', whose *Weekly Pacquet of Advice*

¹ Thomas Rainborough, most distinguished of the Leveller leaders, was murdered by Royalists and his funeral, 14th November 1648, was the occasion for a great popular demonstration, in which the Londoners wore sea-green ribbons because Rainborough had been a noted sailor. From that day green was adopted as the Party colour of the Levellers. Its use by the Green Ribbon Club, and, later, in the sea-green banner carried by Monmouth's Army, was an indication that their case was felt to be a revival of that of the Leveller Movement.

from Rome had for the past two years attacked so much under the veil of anti-Popery, Frank Smith, who had that 'unquenchable spark of sedition in his throat', and the unknown faces of Elizabeth Calvert and Jane Curtis. This was the hour of their celebration, one of the nights when their unconcealed lights could scorch the darkness. Had they so wished, they might have printed the *Agreement of the People* in the centre of London before a cheering audience of ten thousand, for on this night the servants of the Crown stayed indoors.

The commander of this citizen army, 'the Generalissimo of London', watched the scene from his place on the balcony. From this night he was the creator of that new word which burnt its way with such terror and scorn for some — such hope for others — into the English language: mob.

Nothing was more strongly denounced at the time and nothing has been more deplored by a respectable posterity than that Shaftesbury invited the whole male population to participate in his struggle against the Stuart monarchy. It was this appeal, made for the first time at the feet of the statue of 'our darling Queen Elizabeth', which was to have such momentous consequences during the next twelve months.

NINE

THE CAMPAIGN FOR EXCLUSION

WHILE so many passionate scenes were taking place in London, the Duke of Monmouth was in the Netherlands. In the course of his reign the King had disgraced several great men, but in sending his son into exile, he put an end to a relationship.

One of the King's gentlemen, Lord Bruce, who saw everything with the lovingly acute but distorted vision of a faithful spaniel, was to give a moving account of this terrible crisis, in which the figures of his master and the 'good Duke' were torn asunder by the machinations of evil men. His master's world had gone awry; this was the tragedy he observed and felt but never understood. In future the King was to be alone because he had willed it so. The experience of melancholy, which in its way is as final as the experience of age, took up its permanent abode in Monmouth's heart. Officially he was 'Our beloved son . . .' but the blaze of proclaimed love faded so soon into the remark whispered back, denied, believed: 'I would rather see James hanged at Tyburn than see him King of England.'

He had no particular desire to be King: this is what he told his cousin, the Prince of Orange, during their various conversations that autumn. William's diplomatic interests were, at the moment, delicate, for he was angling for a position of power in the Party which had taken his cousin so warmly to its bosom, though, of course, through very different channels; Shaftesbury was no friend of his. Listening to Monmouth's troubles with a cautious and non-committal sympathy, he was as innocent of his own future as he suspected Monmouth to be careless of his. Shrinking, as he did, from relations with the Dutch Republicans, who were known in a scornful phrase as *Messieurs d'Amsterdam*, repelled and disgusted by their habits and history, he was now, through what he judged to

be expediency, seeking the closest ties with their English counterparts. Just as one set of circumstances openly determined the path his cousin was to follow, so another was already selecting his future associates. Had he not always said he believed in predestination? But he failed to see that destiny can have another face than the one pictured in the imagination, for action as well as thought selects the features.

After his conversations with William, Monmouth left The Hague and went to Amsterdam, where he was frequently seen in the company of two men who were to have great influence on his future life: Sir Thomas Armstrong and Robert Ferguson.

Ferguson was in Amsterdam for a very good reason. The Exclusion Bill, whose purpose was to establish recognition of Monmouth as heir to the throne, naturally meant that an argument must be put before the public, and that autumn the first of Ferguson's three famous pamphlets had been published, in which he debated the succession with the government. *An Appeal from the Country to the City for the Preservation of His Majesty's person, liberty, property and the Protestant religion* had created the most passionate interest and controversy throughout the country, and its author had thought it prudent to seek sanctuary abroad. A severe clarity of style was Ferguson's chief merit as a pamphleteer, and his arguments follow one another in vivid, energetic prose.

The main part of the *Appeal* consists of a reiteration of the Party's chief case: the danger to Protestantism as revealed by the Popish Plot; the necessity of citizens to arm themselves against the hirelings of the Court, 'young beggarly officers, courtiers, overhot Churchmen and Papists'. This is followed by some very well-informed passages which, without actually committing high treason, convey quite clearly the impression that for years the King and his brother had been in the pay of France. It then continues:

The greatest danger accruing to your persons as well as to the whole kingdom, upon the King's untimely death, will proceed from a confusion and want of some eminent and interested person, whom you may trust to lead you up against a French and Popish army: for which purpose no person is fitter than his

Grace the Duke of Monmouth, as well for quality, courage and conduct, as for that his life depends upon the same bottom with yours. He will stand by you, and therefore ought you to stand by him. And remember the old rule is *He who hath the worst Title ever makes the best King*, as being constrained by a gracious Government to supply what he wants in Title. That instead of 'God and my right' his motto may be 'God and my people'.

The feelings with which the King and the Duke of York read this may be guessed. The dynastic claims of Monmouth were bad enough, but that he should be prepared to be *such* a King. . . . Well might the Duke of York exclaim bitterly, 'they have made a property of him to ruin our family'. From the point of view of the royal brothers this was the ultimate treachery.

The identity of the *Appeal's* author was unknown at the time, but it is interesting to hear down the winding corridor of nearly three hundred years, the echo of familiar charges. The perpetrator of this book, 'as base a piece as was ever contrived in hell', was described as 'a person whose fortune does not suit with his conditions, and who because he is not at ease and quiet himself, will let nobody else be so neither', or, as a later age would say, was maladjusted to society.

Ferguson was not taken, and seems to have returned to England with Monmouth when the latter came unbidden, at the end of November. Harris, the unfortunate printer, was caught and tried. His trial took place in an atmosphere resembling civil war. The denunciations of the King's judges were drowned in the thunderous roar of the multitude outside, and the penalties imposed were the comparatively mild ones of the pillory and the fire. Harris emerged as a hero from the drama, in which the Recorder of London, Sir George Jeffreys, was also playing a notable part.

This Jeffreys was a poor Welsh gentleman who had come to London to seek his fortune. He had first distinguished himself as a Country Party Lawyer, but had been bought by the Crown at the first substantial offer. As with most men of this type, he showed an extraordinary zeal in prosecuting his former associates; no born aristocrat could boast such a loyal fervour as Sir George, and his stream of brilliant invective eclipsed the rough strictures of the

older Judges. With his outstanding gifts, and want of even the most common humanity, he seemed a portent of these new times, secretly startling those who had created the environment in which he bloomed. A man who was 'clamour proof' was, in a real sense, a new kind of man.

Amid all this excitement, it was not likely that anyone gave much thought to the one individual for whom the conflict had a peculiar and solitary significance. Since he had returned to England in defiance of his father's commands, the Duke of Monmouth had lived in disgrace. Not only were all his great offices taken from him, but he was relieved in an insulting manner of his honorary appointments. He seems to have borne these reverses philosophically, realising perhaps that no one could perfectly understand his difficulty, for no one else was in his position.

He was thirty years old and in the prime of life. The responsibilities of his office of Captain-General had improved his mind, and the difference in his position from that of his near relatives had caused him to acquire characteristics which were not shared by any other members of his family. He was at heart a dissenter and a democrat and though he never consciously realised that he was either, his actions, as the experienced and suspicious eyes of his father and uncle observed, were determined by this inborn nonconformity. Monmouth's 'Protestantism', his frequent urgings that Parliament should be left to decide the future constitution of the country, appeared to them in only one light. A genuine doctrinal conflict existed in the family circle, and this was twisted in an ugly way by the whole long-suppressed question of the son's birth. The early years of his life, though never mentioned, were not forgotten.

The facts were, that till he was nearly eight Monmouth had lived with his mother. He was then abruptly removed from her care and lived for a while with strangers. Then the King sent for him, and for the third time he acquired a new position, a new set of relatives and relationships. Probably no one ever spoke to him of his mother or referred to his early life, but possibly from time to time in some word left unuttered, perhaps in a look, or in some casual remark, cycles of repressed feeling would be generated. Much of the feverish activity of his life may be attributed to a

desire for the present to erase the past, but now these avenues of escape were to be blocked. The *Appeal* was the first of a sequence of events which forced him to investigate and reflect upon every detail of his childhood.

In the spring of 1680, the King took up the challenge of the *Appeal* and ordered the Privy Council to investigate a rumour concerning his supposed marriage with Monmouth's mother. The story selected for investigation concerned a mysterious black box containing his marriage certificate, which was supposed to have been in the possession of Sir Gilbert Gerrard, nephew of the late Dr Cosin, Bishop of Durham, from whom he had inherited it. Sir Gilbert made a statement on oath, the story was examined in a thorough and open manner and was convincingly proved to be a fabrication.

This was a clever move and one which needed a careful reply. It is said that before attempting it, Ferguson took a walk in the fields beyond the city, sorting out his ideas as he went. The young Scotsman who had been ejected from his Kentish parish, had come a long way in those sixteen or seventeen years, though perhaps most men would not recognise a conventional success in his achievements. For instance, he was no richer than he had been and no doubt 'my deare and only deare', was making shift in the usual temporary lodging. Real power needs no appearance and the table of an ale house will serve as well as anything else for the composition of a masterpiece.

A letter to a Person of Honour concerning the Black Box was to be the most famous pamphlet of the decade. Three thousand copies were printed and distributed, and every supporter of the Party, from Bristol to Birmingham, must have believed it true.

Like everything else he wrote, it falls into clearly defined arguments. First: 'the whole enquiry referring to the Black Box is a mere romancce, purposely invented to sham and ridicule the business of the marriage, which had indeed no relation to it'. In other words, it was an intrigue fabricated by the Duke of York. A genuine enquiry, he goes on to say, could not be held before the Privy Council composed of courtiers, but must be held before Parliament, and the witnesses to be examined should be those who knew the

King during his exile, when the marriage was supposed to have taken place.

Then comes a passage of peculiar significance. It refers to the belief that during the Commonwealth Lucy Walter was married to the King. Ferguson speaks of this not as someone imparting a new and startling piece of information, but as if he is referring to something well known and of long standing. This he could not have done if the question of Monmouth's legitimacy was a recent invention of the Exclusionists. There would be no sense in pretending to recall ancient rumours if, in fact, they had never existed.

Ferguson then emphasises his main point:

But it is a piece of necessary wisdom, at this juncture, to know what not to say, as well as to understand what to say. And, to tell you plainly, I am more a servant and friend to my country, than, by pretending to plead the Duke's cause and to be useful to the nation, to discover the witnesses which are in reserve, or to betray the further evidences which are to be produced when this matter shall come before a competent judicature.

The British love of a compromise, so cloudy on the surface, so practical and cunning in reality, shines through these phrases. A harsh critic might say this position was totally illogical: either Monmouth was legitimate and consequently the heir to the throne, or he was a bastard and had no claim to it at all – not even the most adroit casuist could contrive a situation of partial legitimacy. Yet it is probable that the Party had decided to revive that custom of 'Old English Government' of selecting, by consent, an heir to the throne from a group of members of the royal family – not necessarily the eldest son or the direct legal heir. A recent precedent was the case of that useful heroine, Queen Elizabeth, who, after her mother's death, had been declared a bastard, for Henry VIII never revoked his decision that his marriage with Anne Boleyn was null and void. Yet he had named Elizabeth in the succession as if she were legitimate.

It was no part of their programme to prove the marriage *now* or – remote possibility – for the King by his own act to own Monmouth as his legitimate son. Their plan was probably to get the Exclusion Bill passed first and then to hold a Parliamentary

enquiry into the marriage, which would decide, on the evidence produced, that there was a likelihood of it having taken place, and on this basis offer the crown to Monmouth.

All these decisions would derive from a Parliamentary vote; consequently neither Monmouth nor his heirs would ever be able to maintain the purely dynastic right. In the reproachful words of Dryden, it was to be a 'limited command'.

It is interesting to speculate on the sources from which Ferguson drew his material for this pamphlet, and the third which followed it in June: *A letter to a Person of Honour concerning the King's disavowing his having been married to the Duke of Monmouth's Mother*. A good deal of investigation into the past was evidently being undertaken, and it is in connection with this that the figure of Sir Thomas Armstrong emerges clearly upon the scene.

Tom Armstrong was a fire-eating military hero, the kind of man whose sword came out too easily, and whose public character – he was as renowned for duelling as for drinking – did less than justice to a certain private steadiness. He was loyal to his political associates and especially to Monmouth, whom he held in great affection.

His early life is of particular interest. He was born in Holland in 1624, and thus was about six years older than the King. He was the son of an inconspicuous English soldier in the Dutch service, and on coming to England apparently declared for the Royalists. After various adventures he joined a secret Cavalier organisation devoted to raising funds for the exiled Charles. In 1655 he is known to have travelled to the young King, bringing with him a considerable sum of money. He then appears to have remained with the little court and eventually to have married a niece of Hyde's. It is therefore probable that he knew Monmouth's mother, for she also played a part in these secret organisations. In 1656 she went to England as an emissary to the Cavaliers (it may not have been her first journey) and subsequently there was the scandalous business – so agitating to Royalist circles abroad – of her separation from the King.

After the Restoration, Armstrong returned to England and took up a military career. He was knighted and made a Groom of the Bedchamber. The King appears to have trusted him as a personal

friend, and by reason of his marriage he was, of course, cousin to the Duchess of York and nephew to the Chancellor. It was Tom who broke to Charles the news of Madame's death, and it was he who was detailed to keep a fatherly eye on Monmouth during his first foreign campaigns. More and more as the years pass, do we hear of Monmouth and Armstrong being together, and it is obvious that a warm relationship existed between them. There is no evidence as to what his political views were in the early part of the reign, but it is easy to understand the profound resentment with which the King saw him desert to the New Country Party. Here was a man who was dangerous, not only because he appeared to be usurping the parental role, but because he knew too much of the past. The memories of a child of eight may be vivid, but they tend to be of the things important to a child; pictures of incidents not coherently related in time. It is possible that Monmouth may have had some memory of his mother's face and of words she said, but it would be like the memory of a dream difficult to analyse. But suppose Armstrong was in a position to substantiate the images, to fill in some of the gaps?

Suppose it were Armstrong who told Ferguson some of those details about the secret Cavalier organisations drinking Lucy Walter's health on their knees as their King's wife? Suppose it were he who supplied some of those stories of life in Holland which appeared in the anonymous novel, *The Perplexed Prince*?

Years afterwards Burnet noted in his history that the King hated Armstrong as he did few other men, and blamed him as the source of Monmouth's belief in his legitimacy. If this were so, Armstrong must have known a good deal about the King's early life.

Acting, then, either from an unscrupulous love of intrigue, mingled with political expediency, or from a sincere conviction, Armstrong and Monmouth now began certain private investigations into the past. Only here and there do we come on traces of the paths they followed, so it is difficult to know precisely for what they searched. Probably it was for papers: for the letters possessed by Monmouth's mother which the King had written her, and about which so many rumours existed. Were they destroyed or lost? Had the King got them? Or had she left them somewhere

for safety? Twenty-five years is a long time when it comes to establishing the whereabouts of lost letters.

In the early sixteen-sixties there was a brother or half-brother of Monmouth's mother at Court. Pepys mentions in his diary 'a Welshman who talks very broad of his sister having been married to the King'. Perhaps he was dead by this time; we do not know. But this was evidently the brother who followed his sister's fortunes and lived with her abroad. There were other brothers still living, but they were remote country gentlemen and had probably never seen their sister since she was a child. The trail would not lead to them. But it did lead to her Aunt Margaret, who had been a relative with whom she had 'kept up'. As a child, Monmouth had lodged with her during a secret visit to London, and it was possible that in these far-off days she had been his mother's confidante.

This Margaret Sambourne was an aunt on the maternal side, a Protheroe, not a Walter. She was now very old and partly senile, judging from the evidence of the interview between her and Armstrong's agent.

All we know of the investigations is what was discovered by the government spies; and this is qualified by the fact that there is reason to suppose some of their information was suppressed in the records.

Through the network of the investigation strange faces stare at us. They are the faces of citizens whose inconspicuous lives, at one point or another, brushed against the path of this old mystery. There is the curious attorney Mr Disney, a brother-in-law of Major Wildman and probably a secret agent of the investigators, or perhaps, as he said, merely an amateur detective for the romance of it, whose imagination was stirred by his acquaintance with Mrs Sambourne and her relationship to the hero, Monmouth. He knew a brewer, who knew a herbwoman, who knew the daughter of the waterman who had once carried Lucy Walter and her small son by boat when they were escaping from Cromwell's soldiers.

One by one, the government agents, following closely on the tracks of the private investigators, examined these people, questioning them closely to see if they really knew anything, and in particular anything that was dangerous. According to their depositions they knew nothing but old gossip, but even if they had known

anything of importance, they would undoubtedly have concealed it. These were not years when it was wise to confess to any particular knowledge of state secrets.

There is no record of any examination of Margaret Sambourne or of her brother-in-law Gosfight, who had till this time been an army paymaster, and who now abruptly disappears from the scene.

If Monmouth succeeded in obtaining any evidence of the marriage of his father and mother it was never revealed. This is by no means to say that none existed, for the plan would have been to lay the facts before a Parliamentary committee, if and when such a committee could be appointed. Paradoxical as it may seem, the New Country Party in its struggle to get Monmouth recognised as heir to the throne was not immediately concerned with the question of his legitimacy. The object of Ferguson's pamphlets was to prepare the public for future disclosures when the time was judged to be ripe. The case was held in reserve, and was still in reserve when the new-turned earth fell on the graves of the principal investigators.

TEN

WHIG AND TORY

I

THE THREE Parliaments of 1679, 1680 and 1681 – which in reality may be considered as one Parliament, whose sittings were forcibly interrupted by royal decree – had one predominant characteristic which determined the whole course of political and social change in England: the determination of the Commons to rule. This was the issue and the challenge from which all other differences arose. A number of factors, comprising the remarkable organisation of the New Country Party and the intensity of political feeling in England, had resulted in the country freeholder and borough merchant easily capturing a majority of seats in the House of Commons. Only disunity or inertia could prevent this victory from being repeated at future general elections; for so long as the interests of these classes were identical and clearly defined, the Commons formed a citadel from which they could not be dislodged. And close behind was the fermenting pressure of classes never yet represented in the government of the country; those increasing numbers possessing neither land nor property who worked for wages or lived by selling what they had made.

This was the fact which emerged so clearly in the glare of the popular bonfires, and which their enemies could not think how to circumvent. Yet circumvent it they must, unless the whole Restoration Settlement was to crumble. The famous compromise, born of the confusion and disillusionment of the middle classes and the astute determination of the large landowners, had not achieved a permanent foundation in the shape of an electoral system revised to reflect the strength of the triumphant classes. Plainly, its only earthly tenure had been that Parliament of King's men which, after eighteen glorious years, had ignominiously collapsed. Faced with the intolerable prospect of yielding up the power which they had

come to regard as exclusively theirs, the Royalists sought furiously for ways to repudiate the verdict of the electors.

It is after the autumn elections of 1679, which decisively proved that the Whig success of the spring was no isolated phenomenon, that the Court pamphlets began to show that almost hysterical reversion to the conception of the divine right of Kings and the necessity of obedience to the monarch, whatever his religion, which was to be their watchword till that day, seven years later, when they abruptly awoke to the realisation that their interests no longer coincided with that of the idol they had made.

Even after the results of the elections were known, it was a year before the King could bring himself to command such a Parliament to assemble; a year of angry recognition for those who were accustomed to think only in terms of religious controversy. The gilt was cracking on that precious word 'Protestant', revealing the rebel beneath.

Throughout the country the great division was in progress: the division between those who identified themselves with the elected Commons, and those, who sharing the royal fears of seeing this body meet in Westminster, suddenly found a thousand good reasons for ignoring the election results.

There was no legal way by which the electors might force the King to summon their representatives to Westminster. In every parish petitions were organised and showered at the King's feet, and and in every county and city – more often than not directed from the legal pulpit – opposing forces gathered who 'abhorred' this seditious act of petitioning. Something like a state of undeclared civil war now reigned. Physical contests took place between the freeholders and the forces of Church and King. The consciousness of power in the former found expression in the tone of their pamphlets and news-sheets, which were couched in terms of modest, even unctuous, propriety: all they were asking was that his most gracious Majesty should summon his loyal and obedient Commons to assemble; in which case they would willingly demonstrate their great desire to preserve His Majesty's life and happiness, etcetera: claims which were rejected with scornful contumely by the Tories.

The West was both the citadel and arsenal of the Party and was now to be the scene of one of its most moving spectacles. In

Shaftesbury's headquarters in the City there was every good reason for campaigning in this area, yet we may suppose that to Shaftesbury himself, another feeling gave poignancy to the practical considerations. To 'Our Earl' this was the land of his youth, where estates were finer, revels and feasts more sparkling than anywhere else; where the polished orbs glided with an astronomical precision over the shadows on the bowling turf, and the men were taller, stronger, more great-hearted than anywhere in the world. And so to this land he now despatched a man, as young and as hopeful as he had once been — his lieutenant, Monmouth.

In August weather, the leisurely journey into the West was begun. Maiden Bradley, Bruton, Sparkford . . . the names followed one another as naturally as poppies follow ox-eye daisies. 'God bless the Protestant Duke!' Through lanes and villages the shout went flying westward like wind through the corn, echoing from the throats of men and women who had fought authority at vestry meetings, bought Confederate pamphlets at country fairs, listened in secret to their chosen chaplain, remembered the Leveller green, crept like pariahs through the countryside. . . . The time has come for a change.

That is perhaps what the sound of his name rising from Somersetshire throats meant to Monmouth; a growing perception that his future and theirs, linked together, could achieve a new and better life. The immense, casual strength of this land promised that there would be a time when he would no longer be dependent on his father's will and his wife's rents, that at last he would be secure in a Parliamentary majority, just as he was secure in the regard of the citizens. He would have seen that the thousands who came to greet him were not gentlemen, but the freeholders, the craftsmen, who lived in and about the prosperous towns; towns which were walled with Ham stone, whose tinge of chrome gave the houses something of the splendour of apricots ripening on a wall. At a glance it was revealed that people did not live meanly here.

Ilminster was the centre from which he and his friends rode on their numerous journeys to meet the people. From White-lackington, where he lodged, he went to Hinton, Brympton d'Eversley, Barrington Court, Colyton, Otterton, Exeter, Ford Abbey. The country houses stood with doors flung wide, the cider

gushed from the casks, a crowd of Quakers stood by the gate; from Exeter alone came a thousand men dressed in white, walking hand in hand, simple as the tall sheaves of lilies growing in the cottage gardens – and if lilies could speak their golden tongues would cry: 'God bless the Protestant Duke and Death to the Pope!'

This mass demonstration in support of the Whigs, the enthusiasm with which not only the ratepayers but the peasantry took the initiative in every gathering, shocked and startled the gentry. The clergy withdrew disapprovingly into their tall churches, the urban capitalists stayed at home; it was soon noticed that the manor doors opened to Monmouth were those either of the traditionally Parliament squires, such as Strode, Prideaux or Duke, or of those few, who from deep conviction, had supported the Whigs. With the exception of Sir Edmund Prideaux and Sir Thomas Thynne of Longleat, not one of these could be classed as a 'great' squire. They were men of moderate estates with gross incomes in the neighbourhood of £3,000 or £4,000 a year, and none of them had ever played a part or cut a figure in the world of politics and power.

Perhaps the most typical as well as the most interesting of these families were the Spekes of Whitelackington. In the English imagination, which has always cherished the term 'gentleman' in its sense of embodying some lost and perhaps never existent chivalric ideal, there is also that other term, sometime synonymous with it, though possessing a more territorial significance – 'squire'. Squire in this sense means the good knight of Norman blood, seized of a Saxon manor, who, century after century, tills his land, serves in Parliament, obediently rides off to foreign wars and dies in battle, after giving 'many mighty blows'; or returns as simply as he went, with a notched sword and many great stories for the winter evenings. The man who gives service for his land, who believes that his honour resides like a country fairy in his armorial shield and that any act of injustice, treachery, cowardice or greed will smirch those simple colours.

The Norman family of Le Espek had been associated with Devon and Somerset since the times of Henry II. In the reign of Henry VI they came into possession, through marriage, of those sweet manors washed by the River Ilc, of which Whitelackington (called in Domesday Wistagetone) was their chosen residence. The arms of

this family – barry of eight azure and argent; over all an eagle displayed with two heads gules, crested by a porcupine – was never to take on the pompous falsity and marble scrolls of the later plutocracy, but drained away into the native heraldry of their manor: azure for the bluebells that carpet the wooded valleys, argent for the lace of wild parsley in the water's shade, gules for the poppies in the corn, and just as the brindled porcupine may have disclosed itself to some ancestor in a significant moment, so their house and their church stood on the rising ground ringed by trees.

The church has an embattled tower sixty-four feet high, but its body is small and thick, and in summer, the glancing light edged with the deepest green of nettle leaves, slides through a narrow window to pierce the tombs of dead Spekes. The manor house shoulders the church; they share the same ochre-tinted stone and its Elizabethan gables raise their pointed cusps above windows, which gaze like bright eyes on sheep in the pastures or reapers in the fields. There is no grandeur about Whitelackington; it stands upon the upward slope of the park as simply as if it had grown there, and its owner, George Speke and his sons, lived in accordance with this setting. George had fought stoutly for the King in the Civil War, but now, following perhaps some illogical ideal of a comfortable balance between monarch and people, perhaps influenced by his wife, who was described by a Bishop 'as the most dangerous woman in the West', he was a Whig, chosen by his neighbours to represent them in Parliament. And Speke was not one of those squires who joined the Party in the days of its pomp and deserted it when the critical moment came.

The refusal of all but the 'fanatic' gentry to be implicated in this festival, affected its character, so that every day the progress became more rustic and 'Levelling'. If the mansion of the Paulets was closed to the Duke, he could be much better seen in a meadow. The palings of Whitelackington's park went down and Monmouth ate his dinner under a chestnut tree, while the eyes of twenty thousand spectators were dazzled by the heat. So it went on. If the gentlemen of the county did not give balls, it was delightful to dance out of doors when the evening scents rose from the grass, and the coolness gathered, plum-dark, in the wooded valleys. The clotted cream was on the fruit, the honeysuckle on the hedges, and

Monmouth pulling off his boots, would run bare-foot races against the athletes of the West, and win.

Far away in another world, in London, the sneerers and the jealous were gathering – ‘Gaffer Scott’ wooing the bumpkins. ‘A man may step very low to get very high’, and the venom of the Court increased as its fear grew. It was said a woman had touched Monmouth in Hinton Park and been cured of the King’s Evil. Prince Perkin! But all the laughter and jests in the world could not drive away the knowledge that a tumult was rising in these distant parts, that a country ‘mob’ was being added to the city one. Already some of those whom Lord Halifax had described as the ‘eternal corporation of knaves’, were frightened into making hasty overtures to the Country Party, both the Duchess of Portsmouth and Lord Sunderland were reported ready to support Exclusion after waiting to feel which way the political wind was blowing. Now a sound from the country came stealing into the arid heat of the city, a lilting music like the echo of fiddlers’ tunes, of airs young lips could sing and young feet dance to.

*Young Jemmy was a lad
Of Royal Birth and Breeding,
With ev’ry Beauty clad:
And every Grace exceeding;
A face and shape so wondrous fine,
So charming ev’ry part:
That every Lass upon the Green
For Jemmy has a heart.*

*In Jemmy’s powerful eyes
Young Gods of Love are playing,
And on his Face there lies
A thousand smiles betraying.
But oh, he dances with a Grace,
None like him e’er was seen;
No God that every fancy’d was,
Has so divine a Mien.*

Perhaps it was from a lass upon the green, or from the wife of a welcoming house, that Monmouth got some of those little domestic

recipes he jotted down in his notebook about this time. 'How to make hair grow – *Aqua Mellis* taken into the springtime of the year, and warmed and sponge the roots of the hair with it.' In spite of all the political furore, 'Young Jemmy' still preserved his innate simplicity.

In the early days of October, the heat was fading at last. Autumn came, and with it the long-awaited Parliament at Westminster. The Houses met in the last days of October in an atmosphere of conflict so burning, and so nearly balanced that the strain of excitement was almost unbearable.

The King, poised precariously on the tight-rope of his own calculations, opened the session with one of those speciously dignified speeches on 'Unity' which all statesmen conscious of a weak case have made throughout the centuries, and are still making to this day.

His words were succeeded by a silence. Then Russell rose and asked what was the good of talking about unity when every Protestant life in the country was in danger? The challenge was given and the fight was on.

II

The heat of enthusiasm is often supposed to lead to confusion of thought, just as serene self-control is considered to be the state of mind most conducive to rationality. However, it sometimes happens that the reverse is true; that reflection allows a maze of unconscious dishonesties to present themselves as impartial truths, while under the influence of passion, real motives come bursting from their long burial. This was the case in this winter session of 1680; rage and fear were clarifying the real issues with more accuracy and speed than could hours of meditation.

The strategy of the Commons' attack on the *status quo* had not only taken definite shape; it had definite aims. The Exclusion Bill was the spearhead of the attack, but this, even if passed by both Houses and accepted by the King, was by no means the ultimate objective. It was a preliminary to a constitutional change in which the monarchy, the House of Lords, the judicature and the armed forces, would be subject to the control of the House of Commons, which, as the leading House of Parliament, whose right to assemble

annually would be guaranteed by law, would be the seat of power in Great Britain.

It is not to be supposed, of course, that this revolutionary programme was formulated in its entirety by the coolly calculating minds at the Green Ribbon Club. Part of it at least sprang red-hot from the logic and necessity of various events which compelled even the most practical and opportunist members of the Commons to come to a decision on policy. At the same time, a similar clarification of feeling was taking place in the Upper House.

During the critical moments of 1641, a majority of the Lords had sided with the Commons. It was an ephemeral, almost an accidental majority, which swiftly melted away in the glare of understanding, but it did, nevertheless, create new and advantageous conditions for the rebellious party. It gave them a cloak of legality. But in 1680, the English upper classes were forty years further along the corridor of political development, and a clearer appreciation of their own circumstances and their own interests insured that on this issue they did not side with the Commons. Even more important perhaps was the knowledge, now possessed by everybody, that they never would. In this connection no peer is more representative of his class than Lord Halifax, and it is interesting to trace through the year the growth of his feeling on the subject of Exclusion. In a symbolical sense, the great debate in the Lords on Exclusion, was really a contest between Halifax and Shaftesbury, for each reveals the philosophy of the party for which he stood.

In the early part of this turbulent year, Halifax has withdrawn himself into a neutral retirement and is deliberately concentrating on the picture of himself as a rational rustic, removed from the passions which are consuming others. In February 1680 he writes: 'Whether it be the general disease of loving home, or whether for the sake of variety, since I have been so long absent as to make my house a new thing to me, or by comparing it to other places where one is less at ease, I will not determine; the best reason I can give is, that I grow every day fitter for a coal fire and a country parlour. . . .'

In another letter more detail is added to the self-portrait. 'The King of France hath great pleasure to see how all the world trembleth under him, for I suppose it a satisfaction suitable to his

heroic mind; but for my own particular, was I in his place I could find out a hundred things that would please me more than to keep Flanders and Germany from sleeping for fear of him.'

Such rapid violence, above all such exaggeration is to be deplored. This had been his view in the days of '74, when his coach had rolled across the stricken and desperate Netherlands. Even then he could not but disapprove the Dutch resistance, which was surely unnecessary in those who might, by moderate submission, buy the benefits of English rule.

However, as the Parliamentary session approached, a worldly anxiety sometimes interrupts his rural meditations. For instance, he writes to Monmouth's friend, and one of the Country Party's main supporters in the West, Tom Thynne: 'For my own part I neither am nor will be under any obligations that might restrain the freedom of my opinion concerning him [the Duke of York]; but yet if there is any possibility of making ourselves safe by lower expedients, I had rather use them, than venture upon so strong a remedy, as the disinheriting the next heir of the Crown.'

Then, at last, the day arrived when he was forced to declare his opinion, and he did so in a very determined manner for one so avowedly impartial. Afterwards he wrote to his brother, explaining the reason for his brilliant and successful forensic display in the famous debate. 'I confess I have an obstinate kind of morality, which I hope can make amends for my want of devotion.' The Exclusion Bill, he says, is an indecency which 'I can never digest: and though I agree with you this is not an age for a man to follow the strict morality of better times, yet since mankind is not yet so debased but that there will ever be found some few men who will scorn to join in concert with the public voice, when it is not well grounded. . . .'

Without being guilty of cynicism, the enemies of this lord might well have been forgiven for asking if this 'obstinate kind of morality' was roused against the Exclusion Bill on general principles, or against the Excluders, on grounds not mentioned?

A very interesting sidelight on this is found in an interview Lord Halifax had at this time with the Dutch Ambassador. The Ambassador, who was an Orangist, apparently did not understand the subtleties of the situation, and remonstrated with Halifax over

his part in defeating the Exclusion Bill, which, if passed, surely would leave the Princess of Orange heiress to the Crown.

After some protestations of friendship for the Prince—the warmth of them might have surprised the Court if they had been overheard—Halifax went on to say, ‘that he for his part knew well that the Duke could never bear rule over England . . . that he himself would be the first to oppose it, but that the Prince would do well on his part to be on his guard against persons who would deceive him—who had private aims—and who only desired to obtain the passage of the Exclusion Act against the Duke of York, in order to prove beyond doubt that Parliament had the power to make such an Exclusion. That the measure once passed, this Cabal, deriving its precedent therefrom, would consequently in the course of two or three years, and in another Parliament, endeavour to effect further Exclusions, and to place the Duke of Monmouth on the throne, in whose interest all this was being done’

It is possible that Halifax was spinning a web to deceive the Dutchman, yet on the whole it is more likely that he was for once speaking the whole of his remarkably shrewd mind. This is his real case against the Exclusion Bill in a nutshell, and though it is dangerous to be positive in politics, it is as necessary to make up your mind on vital issues as it is to be free of obligations in your consequent actions. Though nine times out of ten an ‘obstinate kind of morality’ will do service for any explicit revelation of motive, yet the tenth time it is necessary to say what you mean and say it clearly, sometimes even crudely. This dualism is the chief part of an English statesman’s art, and no one understood it better than Halifax. It cannot seriously be doubted that he did not care the tip of a silkworm’s tail for the sacred rights of the Duke of York, what did occupy his astute mind was getting rid of him without assistance from the Excluders or any disturbance in the general framework of society.

Probably his private meditations ran something like this: pass the Exclusion Bill and you issue a challenge to war, which the Royal family (in particular the Duke), the French, and the Church of England will take up. It is then more than possible that on the King’s death (which, since his apoplectic seizure three years before, could be considered not unlikely) actual civil war would break out,

in which the Yorkists could only be defeated by those classes whose victory would mean such danger for men of the finest estate. On the other hand, keep things as they were, substitute for the Bill some limitations on the power of a Catholic sovereign (which it was tolerably certain the sovereign would never accept) and there were hopes of manœuvring the Duke into a position where he could be shuffled quietly down the backstairs to make room for Orange.

No exact record remains of the debate in which Halifax and Shaftesbury exhausted themselves in public argument, but in an extremely interesting paper written the following year, called *A Seasonable Address to both houses of Parliament concerning the Succession, the Fears of Popery and Arbitrary Government*, Halifax probably used again some of the arguments he advanced in the debate, and which no doubt expressed the views of the majority of peers who voted against Exclusion.

Apart from its graceful decoration of historical precedent, its embellishments of wit and hyperbole, the *Seasonable Address* states the case for what might be described as the big landowner against the small bourgeois. It recognises in almost every sentence that Exclusion is a masquerade whose reality is a war between these two classes.

The danger to the country from Popery is now negligible, says the author, and under cover of this fictitious threat, 'the Presbyterians' (or Country Party) have 'infected the generality of the kingdom, the common traders and dwellers in cities and corporations, and the unthinking and illiterate part of the gentry with hatred against monarchy and the Church of England'. Their object is plain; 'the court or monarchial party is first weakened and destroyed and after the whole form of government altered into that of a commonwealth'. Or worse still, 'a plain democracy, and for an English king obtrude upon us a Doge of Venice; for he [a Whig writer] tells you at large, that the ancient power of the king is fallen into the hands of the Commons, and therefore, to keep up the former illustrious splendour of the crown, he would have all its jewels taken out and set about the speaker's chair, the king made a cypher, and divested of all power but the name'.

If it came to a choice, better to be ruled by the King alone than

by the House of Commons, and let the 'demagogues and tribunes of the people' beware and take heed of what happened in the past. 'The Long Parliament were soon turned out by others, and because what is sauce for the goose is sauce for a gander, this, of course, will be the fate of those who now glory in being ringleaders of faction, to thwart and oppose their sovereign; nay it may possibly be worse; the gentlemen, the knights of the shires may be kick'd out by mechanicks, by citizens and burgesses, for he who practiseth disobedience to his superiors teacheth it to his inferiors.'

It was the invasion from below that was to be feared; the Cits and Bumpkins were hallooing for power and no man knew what would happen if they achieved it. The Tory news-sheets breathed a passion of scorn for the inferior classes, 'the little insects and vermin of mortality' who were 'petitioning and addressing to deprive the greatest subject in England and Europe of his birth-right, as if a little forty shilling man or Burgess might not have his toes trod upon without undoing the whole nation'.

It is this passage, with its curious vividness, which strikes at the substance of many mellifluous speeches in the Upper House. Lord Halifax might express it more gracefully, but the matter is identical.

The general cleavage between class and class was also cutting its way through enemy territory into the very heart of those headquarters which were distinguished 'by green ribbons, by general committees and sub-committees, where all transactions of Parliament are first designed and hammered, collections made, a common purse managed and agents employed in every county to prepare and influence the people'. Changed looks were noticed among many of the Party's wealthier supporters, who were beginning to doubt if their interests were quite synonymous with those of Dissenting ministers and carpenters. But the powerful central group was still determined to go straight ahead; strike for victory and then, if the need arose, do as Cromwell did, and evade or crush their 'fanatic' wing. In general, this must have been the theoretical aim of Shaftesbury, Russell, Essex, Anglesea and those other peers who voted for Exclusion.

Lord Shaftesbury had been ill that summer, and characteristically, was impatient of his sickness. 'If a man thinks about his body he always discovers he is ill.' He was sixty and the struggle

was reaching its peak. He did not often go to Wimborne now, but lived chiefly in his house in the heart of the City, and living in Aldersgate can bring its changes. Merchants and citizens were more often at his table than were his fellow squires, and the City itself was like a little militant republic, a Venice set in enemy land, where strange things could befall a King's man. There is the story of a young country clergyman venturing into this alien territory to seek the blessing of the Bishop of London. Finding himself lost in the dark, the young man was led into the presence of a tiny person in a grey silk nightgown. Dropping on his knees, he asked his blessing; to which the person replied, 'I give you my blessing as Earl of Shaftesbury, which perhaps may do you as much good as my Lord of London's; but he lives over the way'.

It is against this background, that 'Our Earl', no doubt accompanied by the faithful Stringer carrying the briefcase, went rocking off in his great coach to Westminster on the night of 18th November 1680. The Exclusion Bill, triumphantly passed by the Commons, was now to be debated in the Lords. According to the general report, Shaftesbury's speeches were not as convincing as those of his chief opponent, Lord Halifax, and no doubt this was true of the assembly in which he spoke. For Shaftesbury was fatally handicapped in his arguments by the nature of the audience he had to persuade; he could not deploy all his forces, for if he did, the ugly truth would slip out, and it would be seen that he 'relishes the soul of an agitator rather than of a peer'.

It might be asked on all sides, from peers and Commons, enemies and friends; how is this possible? How has it come about that Ashley Cooper, Earl of Shaftesbury, an enormously wealthy man, who only five years before was defending all the privileges of the peers, indeed advocating their paramount rights in the government of the nation, should find himself in a position where the House of Lords, through its very nature, is an enemy to his case? In spite of all the ingenious arguments he advances upon the dangers of Popery it is obvious, indeed flagrantly so, that he is on the wrong side in the class war.

The Whig Party never forgave Shaftesbury for this astonishing bound over the fence, and Liberal historians have never forgiven him since. He made a choice which put him outside the pale.

How could he have made it, and why? If he was sincere in '75, surely he could not be so in '80? Only an unscrupulous man could change so rapidly, only a man eager for high office at any price, a 'fairy fiend, determined to ruin or to rule the state'.

But the idea of a complete change is an arbitrary conception. Perhaps in the beginning – perhaps always – Shaftesbury served a hatred; a hatred of kingly power as personified in the Stuart brothers; or perhaps – for one is the obverse of the other – he served a love; a love of mankind in maturity, ruling itself. It is not necessary to believe him disinterested; his own ambition, his own independence, made him identify himself with his cause, and after that initial break with the Court, he came by one practical step after another to his present position. In '75, the House of Commons of the old Cavalier Parliament was useless, so he used the House of Lords; then he saw that cabals of peers were not enough, that it was necessary to organise the classes who hated the monarchy, and this he proceeded to do. It then became urgent to produce a programme to check the monarchy for ever, and if this implied a transference of power within the nation, then it must be accepted. Of course, at some point on the way he should have hesitated, should have remembered his interest as a peer and sensibly put that fact before his hatred or his love. But he could not; instead he went on blindly, like a hound hot on the scent, leaping ditch after ditch, and never saw – or never cared – where the remorseless chase led, as long as it was successful. His is a classic case of a man whose actions transformed his thought.

'There wants but one step more', wrote one of his enemies in an indictment of his policy, 'to bring all to a level, and that point comes on now in course. You tell the world, my lord, that the yeoman and plain country man hath kept his senses when the greatest part of the nobility and gentry have lost theirs. The good gentleman at the Old Bailey on the night of triumph, and the little *querpo* Levite, when they waved their hats and cry'd shout, shout boys, to the rabble, could have done no more themselves than this comes to: but for a person of quality to set up clouted shoes for the oracles of law and government, turn the nobility and gentry to school in Bedlam, and reprobate the very religion of the Church of England, as well as the Churchmen, and in a breath, is to outdo

the worst of men and times, to introduce new articles of faith and of state; and in effect, an appeal from the privy council to the Bear-garden. What, with submission, could a Masianello or a Wat Tyler have said more?’

Wat Tyler . . . never, even in the heated opinion of his enemies, had he intended to come to this, to be likened to a peasant leader, called leveller. Yet during that last debate, rising again and again to hurl his eloquence upon the assurance of Halifax, exhausted by the hours of talking, by the sustained nervous tension, it would not be surprising if fancies from the past flashed across his brain. Was it Lord Pembroke’s son who stood by the hearth waiting with a long, cruel nail to catch his chin? No candle or fire could lessen that shadow; the enormous shadow of the tyrant against whom he must advance.

And the man whose figure cast it? He too was changing with the times, drawing back for breath, with some of his composure gone, sullen, sick, frightened and vindictive. Both the King and Shaftesbury must have known, when the vote was taken and the Exclusion Bill was defeated by 63 to 30, that the Parliamentary game was finished. This night, the night of 18th November 1680, finally decided the question of whether the Country Party could achieve power through constitutional means. The decision had gone against them.

ELEVEN

ROYALIST COUNTER-ATTACK

I

BEFORE THE end of the year, the King dissolved Parliament, and after the elections, issued writs for the new one to assemble, not at Westminster, which was in Shaftesbury's territory, but at Oxford.

The King felt himself strong enough to make such a decision and his judgement was correct. During the last year, a gradual shift in public opinion had taken place, a shift which marked the decline in the fear of Popery, which was now beginning to be replaced by fear of Parliament. The curtain had finally come down on the long drawn out drama of the Popish Plot, and it cannot be denied that the concluding scenes had been mismanaged by Shaftesbury. In an effort to keep alive the fear of Popery, ill-chosen accusations, supported by manufactured evidence, had been made against Catholics who were obviously harmless. And if the accused did not positively appear as martyrs, they were certainly given an opportunity of rousing doubt and pity. The trial and execution of Lord Stafford in the preceding winter had to many an air of martyrdom and caused a revulsion of feeling, of which the Court now decided to take advantage. The summoning of Parliament to meet at Oxford was a stroke which the Whigs rightly interpreted as a serious challenge, and the members feared, if not a new Gunpowder plot, at least a wholesale arrest of members. All prudent New Country men rode to Oxford with their swords sharpened and pistols in their holsters. The Duke of Monmouth personally suggested to Stephen College – who possessed, besides arms, forty-two yards of true blue riband, as well as ballads and cartoons of his own making – that he should inspect the hall in which the house would sit and see that nothing ill was planned.

Subsequent events were to prove the weakness of this defensive attitude, the political ineptitude of carrying small arms and being

'on the watch'. It was the Tories, not the Whigs, who went to Oxford with a carefully thought out plan.

The King took his Life Guards with him, and even more valuable, he carried the secretly renewed friendship, soon to be expressed in the most generous financial terms, of King Louis. The Court of Versailles was now seriously alarmed at the growth of republicanism in England; it was no part of French policy to see the Stuarts seriously threatened, and the agreement negotiated between Louis and Charles was of a nature which enabled the latter to carry on the government even if, as seemed only too likely, the Commons refused to vote supplies.

In a fine stroke of psychological warfare, the King swiftly and unexpectedly dissolved the Oxford parliament and the Whigs went nervously galloping back to London like so many Huguenots escaping from an English Bartholomew's Eve. Shaftesbury, calmer than his supporters, announced the basis of a new strategy: 'There will be no more Parliaments.'

Civil war appeared inevitable to most people; to a few it seemed already in existence. In the ominously clear atmosphere which marked the end of the Parliamentary game with its privileged verbal battles, a considerable number of Shaftesbury's party grew cold as they thought of the future. At first this was more a negative than a positive defection; they were against further measures which would lead to that point most feared by men of substantial property, the point known as 'extremes'. From this instinctive position arose their predestined deterioration into Whigs. In the beginning their attitude was merely that of prudence: to wait and see, to do nothing provocative or unlawful.

However, the party, though pruned of its more luxuriant growth, still possessed a good militant core. The ranks of the small bourgeoisie in the towns and of the yeomen in the country held firm, as did a fair proportion of the wealthy merchants.

While this secret division was taking place, the King retired to Windsor, the better to contemplate his prospects. He now had a party composed, as he said, of 'old friends', new allies and a foreign treasurer. The machinery of government was in his own hands, he possessed some seasoned regiments, and was gathering round him a nucleus of new servants, men who understood modern trends.

Neither of the Royal brothers liked or trusted the clever Halifax, to Charles's keen eye his loyalty was agnostic, to James he was simply an atheist with no bowels. Nevertheless he was accepted, flattered and rewarded.

The reviving self-confidence of the Royalists was reflected by the various propagandists who began to write about this time. The *Heracitus Ridens*, with its racy dialogue between Jest and Earnest, crystallised not only the case for the King, but perhaps more important, all the prejudices of the gentry and their imitators against the middle classes. Dryden was composing the first of his matchless satires on the upper circles of the Whig hierarchy, and though none of these productions aimed at becoming the treasures of the simple multitude, they enraptured the sophisticated and gave a great impetus to their sense of superiority. The whole of the *Popish Courant* was not worth a couplet from *Absalom and Achitophel*.

Deprived of their Parliament, the Whigs had one real and vital strength—their hold on local government. So long as they were in power in the boroughs, they believed nothing could be done to crush and disrupt their party.

The King based his campaign on what he termed the Laws of the Land, interpreted, of course, by the most cunning legal brains. He could arrest his enemies and bring them to trial, but at this point he came into conflict with the Whig front in the shape of the jury, and unfortunately, according to Law, the jury could checkmate the Crown. Shaftesbury was arrested on a charge made by some Irish witnesses, of having attempted to suborn them in connection with evidence concerning the Popish Plot, his papers were seized and he was confined to the Tower. But as yet the Council saw no prospect of bringing him to trial. However, the King had no intention of allowing matters to drift to a stalemate. Encouraged by French friendship, now expressed in terms of hard cash, and the wave of reaction, he executed a bold and well thought out stroke—he arrested Stephen College.

The significance of College was very great. He was the popular leader of the London lower middle-classes, and the rough yet brilliant personality of the Protestant Joyner symbolised the yearnings of a whole class. Here was a man, a mechanic by origin, who by virtue of his parts was a leader of the party. His personal charac-

teristics were such as might belong to any citizen: shrewdness, courage and a rough humour. The flaunting of this man in the face of the country had always been particularly irritating to the Royalists, for College, who knew nothing of courts or backstairs intrigues, who never reflected in his closet, as gentlemen did, knew nothing of the classics, and who was, in fact, utterly uneducated, seemed to arrive in some coarse fashion of his own, right at the heart of a problem. Consider the anecdote of some hopeful person who said that all the country's troubles would be resolved if the Exclusion Bill were passed. 'No, no,' said College, 'now you are mistaken, for Rowley is as great a papist as the Duke of York is, and every way as dangerous to the Protestant interest.'

The King returned the compliment: he knew that men like College, through the nature of their circumstances, were far more apt to penetrate the aims of the Royal policy than were peers of the realm, however keen their intellectual powers. Self-interest, in a hundred insinuating ways, affected noble thought and coloured its conclusions; but College had a certain primitive freedom: he had nothing to lose but his life. He was to lose it now.

When the news of his arrest spread through the City, the first reaction must have been one of amazement: was the King so mad as to imagine that a London jury would send him for trial?

The charge was one of writing treasonable ballads against the King and of conspiring to overthrow his government during the Parliament at Oxford. As was expected, the jury rejected the indictment. However, College was not released but was taken back to the Tower, and shortly the alarming news spread that he was to be removed to Oxford, where the alleged offences had occurred, and tried there.

Now the excitement began in real earnest, for the local government of Oxford was in the hands of the Royalists and they could produce a jury who would convict. What was to be done? Was the King to be allowed to carry College off without a finger being raised?

This trial, it seems, was the turning point in the Whigs' career; the first visible sign of the great split which was to bring all to ruin. Had the party showed a united and determined front, had all the Whig leaders followed College's coach to Oxford and offered to

give evidence, there is reason to suppose that the King would not have dared to proceed to extreme measures. But much as they no doubt deplored College's arrest, the Whig leaders held back: no peer or great gentleman gave more than moral support to those who were staunch enough to organise a plan of defence. Shaftesbury did what he could, but he himself was imprisoned, and men like Russell and Essex allowed the Court to see that they did not regard the carpenter's life as being in quite the same category as their own. Grey, for instance, ignores it altogether; writing of this time, he simply says he went to Tunbridge Wells to 'divert' himself. For this fatal error they were all in due course to pay.

Meanwhile, as a member of the Court party noted, an 'abundance of the vulgar sort' were rallying to College's defence. Aaron Smith, one of their cleverest lawyers, prepared the case for his defence, and many good party men, including Titus Oates, had courage enough to ride off, a little armed band, into enemy territory in order to give evidence for their comrade.

The Crown was taking no chances with College. The old array of judges rumbled into Oxford; the grisly lions who had torn down so many victims in the arena of justice. There they were, boasting at great dinners, of what was to be done; Jones, North, and the implacable Jeffreys, who, as King's Sergeant, was once more determined to demonstrate his unique value to the Court.

According to the letter of the law, every Whig was guilty of high treason if he had ever forgotten to keep to the fiction that the King's ministers, and not the King, were responsible for the policy he opposed. To attack the King in speech or writing was high treason; it was not necessary to have committed an act of rebellion. Once a jury returned a true bill, and a man had been sent for trial, the Crown needed only two witnesses to swear to his guilt; if they were forthcoming he could be convicted. It is curious that the art of cross-examination was so little practised at this time. Possibly it was because the prisoner was not represented by counsel, though more particularly because the judges laid it down that the Crown witness was the one to be believed, if his evidence conflicted with that given for the accused. The only chance for the prisoner, therefore, was to prove that the witnesses were liars even before they opened their mouths; from which it appeared that the character

and previous history of the witness was more significant than his actual evidence.

The papers which Aaron Smith had carefully prepared for College, no doubt indicating how he should try to win his one and only point – that he could not legally be tried in Oxford as he was a freeman of the City of London – were stolen from him. So, with his papers taken from him, the prisoner was brought into court bound hand and foot. He refused to plead. Instead he announced that he would say nothing till his papers were returned or counsel allowed him, for he was ignorant of the law and ignorance might trap him to his death.

Arguments, threats and persuasion, were used in vain, and for three hours and a half, with a skill and firmness which astonished even his enemies, the indomitable man evaded every effort to force him to plead.

'My Lord Coke says it is the birthright of every Englishman to have counsel in matters of law, and Lilburne had it upon solemn agreement in his Trial.'

How many ghosts must have stirred when College chose to draw that parallel between himself and the Leveller leader once tried at Oxford.

'What times were those?' interrupted Jeffreys with contempt. 'That was before the High Court of Justice.' Nevertheless, it is not so easy to dismiss the famous protest, and whenever the prisoner says that word 'Protestant', in unpleasant sensation is felt throughout the court.

'I have been as true a Protestant' – He does not say it as, for instance, might a bishop or a lord or any person in authority, but with a difference, a certain alarming significance. 'This is a horrid conspiracy to take away my life, and it will not stop there, for it is against all the Protestants in England.' And the judge's voice rises with thin frivolity, to deride this crude declamation. 'Mr College you do not only tittle, but run into very great extravagances. Who has any conspiracy against your life?'

So the candles were lit as the summer evening wore on, and the bench was driven to adjourn and devise new tactics. The stolen papers were mysteriously produced and Aaron Smith, at peril of his own liberty, was allowed to appear briefly in court, a concession

to appearances. So the lengthy extravaganza was played out with many a well-placed witticism at the expense of the prisoner's trade and humble station. The witnesses for the Crown were an Irishman and an ex-Roman Catholic priest, both being for that reason disqualified in the view of all Protestants. They were persons of no fixed place or occupation, penniless rogues who had scraped acquaintance with College at taverns and now swore to his treasonable utterances. Nothing his own witnesses could say was effectual; only perhaps the appearance of some great man of quality, such as Lord Lovelace or the Duke of Monmouth, who had acquaintance with College at Oxford, could have swayed the jury. But such witnesses were not forthcoming.

So College was convicted and sentenced to be hanged, drawn and quartered.

The government delayed a while before carrying out the sentence, listening for the expected protest. They heard the murmurs of the 'vulgar' but all was silent in the headquarters of the party. The Protestant Joyner was not a nobleman or even a gentleman. he could die.

College did not suffer beheading with the stoicism of Sidney or the sad piety of Russell. He paid the full penalty demanded of the citizen's coarser flesh, and he paid it with the courage of a man who had not disdained to fight for his life, and who was now to be cut down like a green branch in the curve of his living. In the dusty, August silence, his last words linger to erase the bloodstains: 'Where is my dear son that I may kiss him?' And again 'Dear people, dear Protestants, and dear countrymen.' After all the years, it is the voice of love we hear most clearly in the last utterance of College.

Emboldened by this great success, the Court struck again: Shaftesbury was taken before a jury.

But if the King really hoped to decapitate 'the dictator of London' as easily as he had dismembered a citizen, he miscalculated. The whole of the Whig party closed its ranks. The special jury, made up of men whose estates were valued at a million pounds, contemptuously wrote *Ignoramus* on the indictment, and while Shaftesbury played picquet in the Tower with his wife, the Duke of Monmouth offered to go bail for him. Against this formidable

display of unity the Court dared not proceed, and reluctantly the arch enemy was released.

The disappointment of this retreat was very great, and the King's gloomy silences broke into long, complaining speeches. All those hopes raised by the execution of College were temporarily dashed. The way ahead was still difficult and dangerous.

II

How the fall of the City of London was accomplished, is one of those epics which seem to belong rather to antiquity than to the present age, for London, like Troy, fell through treachery. And the person of the traitor was in itself symbolical of the conflict which for over forty years had been tearing the country in half.

The Whigs' hold on local government must be destroyed! Break their control of the boroughs and the whole organisation of their party was broken. This was the fact which the government faced. Like conspirators in disguise, all the thoughts, all the plans and dreams of the Court were directed to reconnoitring the walls of the citadel, to searching and prying for an opening. And the tide was flowing in their direction, seemingly motionless, like the heavy waters about the Tower, the slow accumulation of events moved to a decisive change.

It might be argued that men are constantly changing their political views, but that the Lord Mayor of London should change his at this particular moment is more than accidental.

John Moore, a Presbyterian merchant of substance, had been elected Lord Mayor in 1681. Although the mayoralty was something of a sinecure—the sheriffs were the *de facto* rulers of the City—he had, of course, stood for office as a Whig. But this mere office-holder now suddenly manifested active political feelings. He declared for the King. It is likely that his defection was not a case of bribery, but was symptomatic of the changing views of a strong minority of the City's rich men. Indeed, what happened is only understandable on the assumption that the King now had a fairly substantial party in the City itself—a fourth column, to borrow a term of l'Estrange's, which would be active to prosecute their cause.

All eyes were fixed on the annual election of the new sheriffs,

which took place at mid-summer. The Whigs still had an easy majority, they were on the alert, and it did not seem that they could fail to elect their nominees to this all-important office.

The Guildhall was packed when the day came. The Whig nominees, Thomas Papillion and John Dubois, were there in readiness, and the present holders, Pilkington and Shute, were no doubt watching every movement of the Lord Mayor. What trick would be tried? That one would be attempted was certain, for this was the King's great chance.

The Lord Mayor rose, and raising a glass of wine, drank to a Tory, Dudley North, as sheriff. In doing this he claimed an ancient right which had fallen into abeyance: that the Lord Mayor should choose one of the sheriffs. An uproar ensued, and the liverymen refused their confirmation. The Lord Mayor's choice was rejected.

However, the matter had now to be put to the vote: North and Box standing for the King, Papillion and Dubois for the Whigs. On a show of hands, which was the customary form of voting, the latter pair had an easy majority. But the Mayor would not accept this and ordered a poll. The Guildhall now resembled a battlefield. A Tory mob, most of whom were sent in for the purpose and had no legal right to be there at all, created an uproar, but the Whigs had had considerable training in this sort of thing and fought back strongly while the voting went on. The Lord Mayor, no doubt seeing that the Tories' effort was going to meet with defeat, ordered the poll to be postponed for three days.

It is here that the Whigs made a decisive tactical error. Instead of sticking like leeches at every turn and twist made by the Lord Mayor, and so defeating him on his own ground, they let passion master them. Their sheriffs, now sure of victory, and no doubt intoxicated by the prospect, defied the Lord Mayor and ordered the poll to continue. There were thus two rival polls—the Lord Mayor's and the sheriffs'. Naturally the Whigs flocked to the sheriffs' poll and few bothered to attend the Lord Mayor's, whose poll, though registering very few votes compared to the sheriffs', consequently showed a Tory majority. This was enough for the Court. The King announced that the Lord Mayor's poll was valid, accepted the result, and sent in trained bands to see that the new sheriffs were duly sworn in.

The Whigs now had three months' grace before the knell was due to sound. On 30th September the King would have his Lord Mayor and sheriffs in London; he could command juries throughout this free realm, his writ would run. But that was not all. John Moore issued in the King's name a writ of *quo warranto* calling on the citizens of London to show by what right they held their liberties and franchises. London's charter itself was to be put in the dock before the King's judges.

'They walk the streets as demurely as men in debt, with clouds on their faces and nothing but calamity in their mouths.' So the jeering voice of the enemy described the citizens, and well might it speak truly. Three months was little enough time.

There are various opinions as to what actually took place during this vital period. Most of them are not based so much on the available evidence – which can be interpreted more or less as one chooses – but on how one views the Whig party. If it is looked upon as an essentially aristocratic cabal, dominated by Russell and Sidney, then there is reason for thinking they had nothing to gain by illegal action, and that the abortive rising was only informers' embroidery of a little indiscreet talk. But if the view be taken that the Whig party was, on the contrary, an organisation of the lower middle-classes, then it becomes obvious that they were now in a situation which, from their point of view, was desperate.

The King plainly had not the slightest intention of summoning another Parliament, and his actions with regard to the City made his intention clear: not only did the Tories intend to get local government into their hands, but they might well reconstitute the boroughs and so make certain that any future Parliament would not be elected by the freeholder.

The prospect, in fact, was infinitely blacker than the one which had faced them in 1660. The heir to the throne was a bigoted Roman Catholic; the King was believed to be a secret one, and everyone in his own private thoughts heard the rattle of wooden shoes and the sound of slavery not as some distant evil, but just at the end of the street. Men had risked their lives to fight against much less than this.

Unless they were guilty of a cowardice and vacillation, of which they had hitherto shown no sign, it is probable that the Whigs did

not let the summer pass in idleness. Possibly the so-called Council of Six never existed and the Rye House plot was largely a fiction, but this cannot alter the fact that the party, which did undoubtedly represent the majority of the electorate, found its lawful ambitions effectually blocked by what it regarded as trickery and tyranny, and that Shaftesbury and the other leaders were unlikely to abandon their aims. To continue the struggle by other means, even if this implied a resort to arms, was not a decision they would have shirked.

No record exists of all those who came and went at Thanet House or met secretly in wine shops, but the leaders of London's citizens and the representatives from the West came to discuss a joint plan. Ferguson was much with Shaftesbury these days, acting more or less as a secretary, and in reports of the examination of those taken by the government in the following summer, there repeatedly occur the names that in another two years are to become so familiar: Wade, Francis and Richard Goodenough, Rumbold, Nelthorp, Ayloffe, Holmes.

Some plain speaking was done at these meetings. The City would rise, men would come out of their homes and fight behind the barricades, and 'they would not fight to change persons only, but things'.

This most significant statement was digested by Shaftesbury. It was, in fact, an ultimatum from the left wing to the party. If they fought, they would do so only on the understanding that a clearly defined programme would be drawn up and agreed to, corresponding to the interests of the rank and file. They were under no delusions as to what a fight would mean, nor had they forgotten the lessons of the past; the man who had got to leave his trade or farm and come out to fight did not intend to be cheated twice of his victory.

Although neither original draft nor copy of these proposals have survived, at least two independent testimonies exist as to what they were; and although the people who made them were in a dangerous position and certainly not above lying or incorrect reporting, their proposals so exactly suit the circumstances of the case that it is difficult to reject them.

The proposals drawn up by the left leaders, as given in West's

testimony, were these: they agree with Zachary Bourn's in the main, but are more detailed.

1. That the people should annually meet at a certain time to choose Members of Parliament, without any Writ or particular direction to do so.

2. That the Parliament should meet at, and sit for a stated time, and not be dissolved, prorogued or adjourned, but by their own consent, and that no prorogation or adjournment should hinder their meeting before the day to which they were prorogued or adjourned, if there were occasion.

3. That Parliament should consist of a House of Lords and a House of Commons, but the exact number of both or either of them, this examinant doth not remember.

4. That only such nobility should be hereditary as were assisting in this design, the rest should be only for life, and upon their death the House of Lords be supplied from time to time with new ones out of the House of Commons, but whether by the election of the Lords or the prince this examinant does not remember.

5. The militia should be in the Parliament and the Parliament have the nomination if not the election of all Judges, Sheriffs, Justices of the Peace and other greater or lesser officers civil or military.

6. That what acts passed in both Houses should be a law for one year without the Prince's consent and what acts passed both Houses in two several Parliaments should be a perpetual law without his consent.

7. That a council to the prince should be elected out of the Parliament, a certain number of the Lords to be elected by the Commons, and a certain number of the Commons to be elected by the Lords.

The significance of these proposals can scarcely be exaggerated. Descending, as they plainly did, from the Leveller document, *An Agreement of the People*, they would, if put into practice, have recast the political life of England. Direct government by the enfranchised classes, in which the freeholder and the citizen predominated, involving a total dispensation of the stranglehold of

Crown and Church, would at least have brought into being a state of political democracy at that time unique in the world. It can only be a surmise whether a state so constituted would have foundered on its economic conflicts, or whether it could have shaped a developing capitalism in a way less repulsive and less destructive than it was to be.

The more contemporary significance of this programme is that it seems to prove that the levelling elements of the party were for a constitutional monarch – for Monmouth, and not for a republic. Wade, who appears to have been acting as a spokesman for this group, submitted the programme to Ferguson – representing Shaftesbury – and was told that Sidney and his friends were also drawing up a document with which it would be compared. What Sidney and the other Republicans desired is not known, but we would be justified in supposing that their state would be of a more aristocratic composition. All Sidney's thinking had a somewhat remote and patrician caste, and throughout his life, his circle was composed of high society and philosophers. There is no reason to suppose that he would equate justice, liberty or other desirable principles with popular power.

If Shaftesbury, theoretically, inclined to Sidney's republicanism, it is evident that from a practical point of view, he recognised that only mass action could win the day. While these debates were going forward, he and his lieutenants laid plans for the campaign.

The grand strategy envisaged a simultaneous rising in four areas: the West, Cheshire, London and Scotland. Bristol was to be the centre of the western rising, and in London the City was to be divided into districts, each district having a commander who would be responsible for bringing out his men armed and in good order. In Cheshire, the old Cromwellian, Middlesfield, was to play a leading part.

The rebellion successful, the King was to be offered terms – the calling of Parliament which would enforce the changes agreed to by the party. The Duke of York would be banished, Charles would fade to a constitutional monarch, with Monmouth as his successor, and Shaftesbury as his Prime Minister. But suppose the King refused to capitulate? Or, managing to raise a party, brought the country,

to civil war? Obviously the party which envisaged Monmouth as a constitutional monarch could not plan to kill or execute the King. There seems to have been a general recognition that it would be useless to face him with a *fait accompli*, for it would place the son in the impossible position of profiting from his father's death, and being named parricide for the rest of his life. Such a man, even in the estimation of the killers, could not be sovereign.

It seems likely that Shaftesbury, always optimistic about the King's character, believed that if faced with an overwhelming force, he would 'come in', rather than once more go on his travels, and would settle down to a harmless old age, while his evil genius, York, retired abroad. He probably believed – and rightly so, as events proved – that if York tried to invade England with a foreign army and Roman Catholic support he would be resisted with the greatest enthusiasm by the whole nation. Whatever might happen to particular persons on the battlefield would involve different moral considerations. Monmouth could not be responsible for killing or executing his uncle or father, but if either were so unfortunate as to die in battle, fighting against the English nation, then it would be an act of God and no man need feel disgraced.

Therefore, although it is not impossible that there were republicans in the party who discussed assassinating the King, it is unlikely that any who were in favour of Wade's programme, or under the influence of an excellent practical politician like Shaftesbury, would have been involved in such a scheme. On the contrary, it would have hopelessly jeopardised all their plans.

III

Late summer stretched to autumn, but the quickening in the air did not bring renewed hope. There was no comfort or ease in the City's coffee houses or wine shops; only the stimulation of nerves already worn, so that here and there a man might publicly explode in wrath and cry: 'It is not to be borne!'

All that was done was of necessity secret. Wrapped in cloaks, the Duke of Monmouth and Lord Grey circled the Tower by night and decided that to capture this arsenal by surprise would be a feasible military operation. The Goodenoughs set about dividing the City and choosing trusty men as leaders, and someone else had a scheme

for organising a rough and ready cavalry from hackney horses. Meanwhile, negotiations were afoot to import arms from Holland. Aaron Smith went north on the great journey to Scotland to treat and bargain with the Scots; Colonel Trenchard and the Spekes went to and fro between London and the West.

So much was guessed or hinted at, or believed, among the rank and file of the party, though everything was done under increasing difficulties. The government was far from inactive: the laws against dissenters were being enforced, which meant that ministers went under a constant threat; the printers were liable to find themselves inside a gaol at a moment's notice, and Harris, Smith and Care only carried on intermittently under difficulties. Care's *Weekly Pacquet*, struggling manfully through the history of the reformation, was to end, like some sad portent, with the story of Lady Jane Grey. However, no doubt their pack mules were out again, as supplementary mercurys to Trenchard and the Holland packet.

'Most of the summer,' wrote Ferguson 'past away in secret complaints, in the feeling one another's pulses.'

In his account, composed some years later, he describes, no doubt as truthfully as he could – for both the men and the issues involved were either dead or long since irrelevant¹ – the conflicts and quarrels which wasted away the precious time that was left. In September, with Monmouth's visit to Cheshire, the conflict flared into activity. Great numbers of people gathered to cheer the Whig champion, and Shaftesbury, waiting in London, apparently expected Monmouth to raise the standard of revolt then and there. Monmouth afterwards told Ferguson that he observed that the people had come out of curiosity, that they were unarmed, and that he did not believe the preparations in the West and in London had gone far enough for those areas to give him the necessary support.

Whether there had been an actual pledge that the Cheshire visit was to be the occasion for a general call to arms, and whether Monmouth's failure to give such a call struck Shaftesbury as dis-

¹ In his deposition, made for James II in 1685, Wade said, with what must have been bitter sadness: 'All the persons I can positively charge to have been concerned in it (the rebellion) are either outlawed, dead or executed.' *ibid.*

obedience, cowardice or even treachery, is not positively known; but whatever the cause, it was the final rupture.

Lord Grey gives a different version of this affair. In his bald sentences, jotted down in after years for the eye of James II, scenes of extraordinary vividness flash across the glass of the writer's trivial and cynical intellect. Here, dark as they were in life, are the rooms of City houses, or bronze September gardens still reverberating with the beat of summer's departure. Here, day after day, they met to argue and postpone, in a mood of rising confusion. According to Grey, Monmouth sent a message to Shaftesbury from Cheshire saying everything looked propitious for a rising, and that he only awaited an express command to give the signal. 'The Duke of Monmouth is an unlucky man,' said Shaftesbury, exasperated that he still chose to wait rather than act, but a meeting was called to decide what message should be returned. Now it was Russell who upset every thing. He declared that they were not ready and refused to accept Shaftesbury's statement that in the City alone they had ten thousand men. Putting in disagreement, Shaftesbury took Grey on one side and said, 'My Lord Russell is too wary and timorous a man for such an undertaking,' and he suggested that Grey, in order to save England, should tell Monmouth what was untrue – namely, that they were agreed on immediate action. Grey refused, Monmouth came back from Cheshire, nothing was done, and in the last days before Michaelmas a final meeting took place with Shaftesbury. The three young men, Russell, Grey and Monmouth, healthy, and in full possession of their senses, listened in dismay to the old man alternately imploring and denouncing. Something in the blaze of his passion more than in his arguments – which were indeed quite logical – convinced them that he was no longer sane.

Grey remembered how he cried, 'Patience will be our destruction. If we do not rise in a week at furthest we are undone. I am resolved, since I see myself forsaken by you, to stand upon my own feet, act for myself and have the honour of saving the kingdom.'

When Monmouth challenged him, perhaps pityingly, perhaps equally exasperated – 'Where are your ten thousand men quartered?' – he replied, 'I will tell no man, but you shall see them at Whitehall gates before you are many days older.'

The smoke from this violent scene drifted and settled into a

disappointment which could not be remedied Michaelmas had come and Tory sheriffs possessed the City. All the pictures of that autumn *débâcle* – the flight from Thanet House, the secret shelter provided by dissenters and printers, fade into confusion, through which clearly emerges one image from an earlier scene – the small figure playing picquet in the Tower, while the Whig jury write *Ignoramus* on the Crown's indictment. It is the last characteristic gesture of Shaftesbury ever recorded.

In the story of these months both Ferguson and Grey, though contradictory in so much, tell how death came to this invincible man. It came like insults of water before an advancing tide, as, one by one, the channels of his personality were silently obliterated. He never knew why the others could afford to wait, he could not do so and in the bitter arguments that followed the Cheshire affair, he must have felt what was, indeed, not the product of a sick imagination but a fact – he was no longer the leader of the party.

The substitution of Monmouth for Shaftesbury is chief of the Whigs was one of those events which came about almost unnoticed, as the majority inclined gradually to the opinion that Monmouth had been right over Cheshire, and thus the necessity of upholding the common interest became more urgent during the frantic weeks that followed. The republicans also played their part in bringing things to a head, for as Ferguson said, they now 'put off on a different bottom'. Ignoring the democratic rights advocated by its supporters, the republicans were determined on a republic at all costs – and a republic not won by mass effort but by the murder of the King and the Duke of York. According to Ferguson, Wildman was the originator of this idea, though this has never been proved, certainly the Major was far from being a negligible personality. The years of individualistic plotting had probably given him a distrust, or even scorn, of mass movements. Long ago in the Putney days, it seems that in spite of his brilliant power in debating revolutionary theory, it was Rainborough rather than he who was feared by the Grandees. He preferred the short cut to the more lengthy task of taking the field. 'Major', after all, was only a courtesy title.

To his intense anxiety, Ferguson now saw Shaftesbury inclining his ear to this group. Disillusioned with time, his reserves of power nearly exhausted, he yearned for a quick result. In a few weeks he

seemed to change the opinions of a lifetime and in a kind of feverish frivolity to adopt opinions which a year ago he would have rejected as madness.

In this dilemma, Ferguson acted with craft and caution. He soothed Shaftesbury as best he could, and going privately to Monmouth told him everything. Monmouth ordered Ferguson to keep him informed of all that went on in the would-be assassins' circle, so that if their talk ever matured, he would be warned in time to take action. Meanwhile he impressed on his friends the necessity to push ahead with the insurrection plans – rightly supposing that a line of vigorous action would give the lie to any who believed the rumours of his desertion, or might be driven out of despair to desperate courses.

It has sometimes been said that it was unforgivable of him to have known of this talk and not to have 'run himself out of breath' to tell the King. But if he had done this, he would have betrayed the whole Whig party to ruin and a good many of his personal friends to death. He kept his head, behaved with honour and sense, and subsequent events proved his decision to have been correct.

During the autumn, news came from Shaftesbury in his underground lair that though he was not fully convinced he had done Monmouth a wrong, he was impressed by the sincerity of the plans for rebellion and could not forbear to encourage and advise. It is also probable that he realised that for better or worse, the majority were with Monmouth, not with the republicans. As Ferguson hoped, the would-be assassins dropped their plans, Colonel Rumbold, for instance, a staunch and honest man, seemed to admit he had been wrong, and unity – though possibly more of the head than the heart – appeared once more to reign at headquarters. Ferguson said that the only people who remained still hot for the assassination plot were deliberate traitors who intended to betray the whole thing to the government when the moment was ripe. But agreement had been won too late.

This tragic fact faced all those who came to the November meeting at Shephard's wine shop. Perhaps in their hearts they were prepared to hear the news which Frenchard brought – that the West was not ready and everything must be postponed. Postponed,

they said, till the spring.¹ And the word spring had a certain opportunist ring which seemed to the dying Shaftesbury a last maddening prevarication

The landscape of the past often fades away with its bloom of secrets still upon it, but in this case it can be clearly seen why their plans did not mature, revolution needs the impetus of a flood. They had missed the moment and the ebb was swifter than their arrangements.

Shaftesbury cursed those who would not act during these last months, but he does not seem to have blamed himself for letting slip those triumphant moments of the last Parliament at Westminster. Perhaps there are disadvantages in being a practical politician, he was so sure of the game, and before he decided to play the final card the right wing of his party was sucked away in the great tide of reaction whose coming he should have foreseen. The alliance of 1679 between the yeomen and the upper classes was doomed to end the moment the latter felt secure.

The powerful territorial Whigs knew that in the last analysis the strength of a movement consists in the men who will fight, provided they are fighting 'to alter things, not persons', which was one very good reason why things should not come to a state where the sword could even the disparity between a rich man and a poor one. Their hastily revised political aims dwindled to a removal of the Duke of York and the substitution of a safe prince who would maintain the *status quo*.

On the other side, the growing unity of interest between yeomen and sections of the wage-earning classes, which was generating such power in the West and in London, was not cemented by any decisive theory or programme. In shirking the recognition of this issue, Shaftesbury did not conceal it—for such things cannot be concealed—but he let the day go by default.

So the November gusts blew down Atheist Alley, and like so many puffs of precarious breath, the conspirators were shuttled off.

¹ Grey says (*Secret History*, p. 41) that the rising was only postponed for a fortnight and that Shaftesbury acting on wrong information fled abroad, leaving them all in the lurch. However, it is extremely unlikely that Ferguson was so misinformed, and this is one instance when Grey must be considered unreliable.

by gutters and by-ways. The deserted galleries of the Green Ribbon Club, the Tower hanging above the river, all proclaimed that it was no longer safe to be abroad. Better to scatter and meet again in the spring.

Shaftesbury and Ferguson, Walcot, Frank Smith and a few others went secretly to Amsterdam. The rest stayed at home and wore the winter away as best they could, each locked up in the dungeon of his private anxieties. It must have seemed a long winter and if any ghosts were listening, they heard across the North Sea, the rattle of windows in the January wind, while Shaftesbury lay dying.

He lay in a stranger's house in this alien land of mud and fish, far from all the familiar scenes of his life. But he had with him men who loved him, and in the arms of one of them, leaning on his breast, he suddenly died on the morning of the 21st January 1683.

'Milord Shaftesbury est mort.'

So the news breaks out of this room with the draped bed and the fire burning against the winter wind; the drugs, the tired men who have sat up all night, the spilled broth and the dropped jaw. 'Count Tapski is dead!' 'Oh how great are the judgements of God... all natural causes assisted by God's providence made him pay the tribute to nature in spite of himself and his extraordinary ambition...'

'Oh! Mr Stringer, I am extremely sad when I consider our great and irreparable loss; but the will of God must be done in this matter, who I doubt not, hath at once rewarded his great and eminent virtues, and disappointed the hellish designs of his bloody and malicious enemies, for he is now beyond the reach of English cut-throats or Irish witnesses and the loss is only on our side.'

The enemy and the comrade was dead at last; the spittle of foes, the eulogies of mourners surrounded his coffin and those who saw him lying in state, enclosed in glass, noticed that the face between the fair locks had a smiling countenance: not, we may suppose, the foolish smile of serenity, but the cat smile; ironic, just victorious. He had fought as hard and as skilfully as any man ever did, and the life which glided from him was not wasted.

T W E L V E

THE RYE HOUSE PLOT

THE REJOICING and exultation of the Court at the death of the famous enemy was not reflected quite so clearly in the hearts of the royal brothers 'We shall see who will take his place', wrote the Duke of York with gloomy foreboding. But the King did not need to wait — he knew Monmouth was Shaftesbury's heir.

In February, Ferguson returned to England. This formidable executor of Shaftesbury's political will, seems to have had a genuine affection for Monmouth, and he and the faithful Armstrong were as close to the new chief as guardian uncles. The anxious consultations of the previous autumn were again resumed.

The wave of reaction was still riding high, which suggested the advisability of waiting till some false step of the Court or some issue over foreign affairs presented itself. On the other hand, the longer they waited the more difficult became the task of keeping their organisation intact, and the more obvious the dangers of discovery. A traitor in their midst and they would be blown sky high on their own gunpowder.

All through the spring and into the early summer negotiations went on, the Scots came south to bargain and there were some acrimonious financial discussions. Evidently a good many City purses were closed, the Scots were poor, and Monmouth, who was without assets, had a very depleted rent roll. However, it was decided to strike before the harvest. Too many men were too deeply engaged for them to risk any further delay.

A plot, like a war, needs a favourable condition of public opinion before it can be brought about. Just as the Popish Plot had been necessary to the mood of England in '78, so now a wave of reaction awaited the crystallisation of what is called the Rye House Plot. And so when, on 12th June Josiah Keeling, a minor Whig organiser,

in the City, made a deposition before Secretary Jenkins saying that a few weeks previously he had been engaged in a conspiracy with Rumbold, Goodenough and others to assassinate the King on his return from Newmarket, the Tory landlords and ecclesiastics instinctively believed it. It was, in fact, exactly what they had been waiting for. Irrespective of the evidence – scanty, true or palpably false – a powerful body of opinion felt justified in accepting it because fundamentally and symbolically it *was* true. If not conspiring to assassinate the King, the Whigs were proposing to end the monarchy as the Tories knew it, to raise the old sea green standard and face the Cavaliers with what they believed to be extinction. Here was a Heaven sent chance to declare war; to crush them before they had a chance to strike.

It is this confusion of the true with the false which makes the Rye House Plot one of the most obscure affairs in the history of the period. To begin with, it was a theoretical plot; even in the evidence of the informer it had not been translated from design to deeds. This was the story that Keeling told: there had recently come into Colonel Rumbold's possession an old moated house, called The Rye House. It was in Hertfordshire, and it commanded a good position on the road from Bishop's Stortford to Hoddesdon, which was sometimes used by the King on his journeys to and from the races at Newmarket. The accidental inheritance of this house suggested to some of the Republican group, among them Rumbold, Linsey, West, Walcot, Romsey, Goodenough and Keeling, that it would be a good place to ambush the King on one of his journeys. Plans were laid to do so in March 1683 as Charles was returning from the races. Three or four men were to hide behind a wall and fire at the royal postilions, others were to drive a cart across the road to hold up the King's coach, and the rest were then to come out in two mounted parties (although only six men were named as privy to the plot, these preparations imply that many more were concerned) and kill the King and the guards. However, the plot was never put into practice, as the King returned from Newmarket a week earlier than the conspirators expected.

The only evidence that such a plot was actually organised, are the statements made by Keeling, who was bought by the Government for money, and West and Romsey, who were either 'stool

pigeons' from the start or turned King's Evidence to save their lives, and an underling called Hone, who appears to have been simple-minded. Walcot denied to the last that he was implicated in any such business.

Probably the truth, as near as we can discover it, is that the old stories, dating from '78 and the Popish Plot, that the King might be assassinated by Papists on the Newmarket road, were revived by Rumbold's inheritance of The Rye House, and talked over during the previous year – 1682. At that time, according to Ferguson, the Republicans were speculating on the possibility of murdering the King. This was vague talk which was abandoned before the death of Shaftesbury, and which, according to Ferguson, was never thought of again. This reconstruction of events is borne out by the evidence of Walcot and, much later, of Rumbold, at his trial in 1685.

When Keeling, acting either with West or alone, decided to sell the insurrection plot to the Government, he probably saw the advantage to be gained by turning this old rumour into a reality, rightly sensing that in the public mind insurrection was one thing, but murder another and something which was much more horrifying. It was this pasting of murder on to the framework of the rebellion that caused such a violent reaction throughout the nation.

Like the decorations on an astronomer's wheel, the seasons set a contrast for the Protestant plot. The phantom of its great predecessor had materialised from the mists of autumn, but it was the full daylight of early summer when the little figure of Keeling crept into Secretary Jenkins' office. No one in the New Country Party had any idea of particular danger. It was early June, the greenery was new and the hawthorn scarcely faded. Russell and his wife were leading their dignified and cultured life in Lincoln's Inn Fields; Lord Grey was as happy as conspiracy, a fine fortune and a recent elopement with his sister-in-law could make him; while the long-suffering Mrs Ferguson jotted down on the back of one of her husband's letters (as usual he was in hiding and she had all the family responsibilities), 'for cherries 2d, received 13 shillings for ribon 2/3, for stoberries 4d. . .'. So their lives ran on.

Suddenly the first alarmed voice was saying that Keeling had betrayed. Still it was not really believed, and Rumbold, always

generous, suggested lending him a hundred pounds as he was hard-up and that might be the trouble

It was not till the 17th June that the news was out beyond dispute, and at a hastily summoned meeting in Captain Walcot's lodgings the course of action was argued. It was taken for granted that it was the Insurrection that had been given away, the Rye House Plot and murder never occurred to those who were present, among them Armstrong, Ferguson, Romsey, Rumbold, West, Wade, Nelthorp, Norton and Goodenough. Nelthorp and Norton had already been to Russell and argued the necessity of pushing ahead with the plan, these two and Wade, being young, ardent and decisive, were all for raising the City and the West and 'dying like men rather than being hanged like dogs'

Russell poured cold water on their enthusiasm. The sacrificial garland was already round his neck and he would neither act nor fly. What Monmouth advised is not known and it is possible they had not been able to make contact with him. No one knew exactly what had been betrayed, but they acted on the assumption that the worst had happened and that warrants might already be out for the arrest of most of them.

The older men seem to have decided almost immediately on dispersal and flight abroad. It is easy to imagine the depressing effect of Russell's refusal and of the verdict now given by Romsey, that it was vain to think of rising now 'for the hearts of the people are down and our great men are good for nothing'.

A general retreat to Holland was agreed upon and the meeting broke up in bitterness and grief. To Wade and Nelthorp this was a crushing blow. It meant the defeat of all their plans, the end of the cause for which they had striven so hard. And now to fly for their lives. . . Ferguson, seeing their faces, laughed, revealing in a moment's pity something of his tough and brilliant spirit. 'Gentlemen you are strangers to this kind of exercise, I have been used to fly. I will never leave off as long as I live and I hope to see some of you at Dunbar before Michaelmas'.

It was now every man for himself, though no doubt messages were sent surreptitiously to warn others. In the course of a few days, Armstrong, Nelthorp, Rumbold, Ferguson, Goodenough, Colonel Holmes, Lord Grey – the latter after a fantastic adventure

suitable to his nature – succeeded in crossing to Amsterdam. During the next month or so, about two hundred more followed from Scotland and the West. It would be interesting to know the financial details of these flights; presumably party funds were communal on such an occasion.

Other members of the band were not so fortunate. Aaron Smith, Charlton, Wildman and Trenchard were among the captured, though why Essex, Russell and Algernon Sidney allowed themselves to be taken is a mystery which can only be explained by the assumption that none of them were political realists. Lord Howard of Esrick was caught hiding up a chimney, and Monmouth had vanished. He hid in City houses by day, escaped across roofs at night, and finally made his way to a village called Toddington where a woman was awaiting him. There is something characteristically inconsequential about Monmouth at this juncture, the leader of a great party, who in a moment of crisis, can spare the time to be in love. He had had years of unrivalled opportunity in which to discover the woman he loved, yet it was only now, when all his energies were needed, that he found her.

Henrietta, Baroness Wentworth of Nettlestead, was at this time about twenty-six years old, heiress to the solitary, splendid and decaying mansion to which Monmouth now came with a price of £500 on his head.

They had known each other for years, had met at masques and at other amusements. She had been Jupiter when he danced the part of a shepherd, a maid of honour when he was Prince Charming. She had never married, though she had been sought in marriage and was the last of her line. Little was recorded of her, so that she remains an enigmatic and elusive figure. We did not take each other from lust, said Monmouth, but on due reflection; she was a very virtuous and honourable woman. 'She would have made a perfect wife,' wrote the Tory, Lord Ailesbury, recalling down the passage of fifty years a romance to which his father had put a stop, and adds without any explanation, 'She was a visionary'.

What, we wonder, does he mean by visionary? A solitary, imaginative girl who might steal into the herb garden and pluck vervain when Sirius was rising in the East, or on clear nights climb to some tower chamber to watch the constellations of the stars

and foretell the lives of mortals? Spells and incantations still had their place in life. But perhaps he meant, softening it a little – because he had loved her and love made him inconsistent – an enthusiast. Perhaps her visions were of this world, and she believed in, or idealised, something which he regarded as impractical, even wrong.

Certainly she followed the cause of Monmouth and the party without hesitation. She never seems to have tried to hold him back, as did his Duchess. She slung all her rents into the common treasury, and sold her jewels and plate to buy guns for the *Helderenburgh*. A woman deeply in love might do this, but so might a woman who believed in a cause.

Only one remark of hers is recorded. A bishop had come to tell her of Monmouth's death. She fainted at the harrowing details and then recovering, exclaimed, 'My God! I had that poor man nothing to think of but of me?'

Even the bishop seems to have thought this a little strange for, from the point of view of a woman who had sacrificed everything to her passion, what else could her lover have thought of? Possibly she meant God and the pious etceteras; possibly her words may have had another meaning altogether. 'After all we believed in and gave our lives for, had he not that to uphold him? Did he lose his cause and his heart and have nothing left but me?' If these were her thoughts, the agony shines out clearly and illumines Lord Ailesbury's idea of her as a 'visionary'.

But all this lay in the future, far away over the summer's curve. Toddington was a little realm of its own, and here Monmouth lay hidden. During the day he wore a peasant's dress – there is something invincibly pastoral about Monmouth – but at night he slept secure in a tower, in a great bed hung with green and gold and canopied with plumes. Henrietta's mother, Lady Philadelphia, a passionate, managing but loyal parent, kept up appearances with the outside world, leaving Monmouth and her daughter to lead their own secret lives.

Few imagined Edens can have exceeded this one in grace. There would be so many things to do, all the things that poems and romances idealised as perfect occupations for lovers: playing at haymaking, dressed for the part, cutting their names upon a tree,

helping the maids to pluck herbs and learning their names – veronica, valerian, thyme, balm, fennel, savory, bitter-sweet, marjoram, heartsease, woodruff – clove carnations for the wine casks, dried wallflowers, strawberry leaves, marigold and violet for the metheglin; fishing on the ponds, an excuse to glide over crystal pavements, while the light faded behind the branches of the great trees.

Far away in London things were grim. Here as the summer declined every week seemed to bring new disasters. West and Romsey turned King's Evidence and not only revealed all they knew about the insurrection, but invented everything they could about the Rye House and the intended murder. Lord Howard also betrayed the insurrection, and on his evidence Russell was convicted. Lord Essex was either murdered or committed suicide in the Tower.

When the trials were over, their mouths were stopped. Walcot's head was over Aldersgate and Rouse's on the Guildhall. On a rainy July day, with all the privileges of his rank, Russell was beheaded. He died with resignation, but when the news reached Wade and the others in Amsterdam, they must have wished with some bitterness that he had done more to deserve his death. As his wife said afterwards, he was guilty of nothing but talk.

Monmouth would have felt the death of Russell with shame as well as grief. He had sent him a message offering to come in and run fortunes with him, but Russell had replied that it would serve no purpose. Still, he was dead, while he, Monmouth, equally guilty – or equally innocent – was alive and happy. Yet he must also have been conscious once more of the shackles of that relationship which held him fast: the King knew where he was, and he was safe because he was his son. But, after all, what was he to do if he did not take advantage of this fact? The country was in a convulsion of royalism, the Duke of York in the victorious ascendant, Charlton, Wildman, Hanpden and Sidney were still in prison with many others, their lives in the balance. If he could effect some sort of reconciliation with his father it might be possible to extricate some of them. And he guessed, or knew, his father would want him back; for as long as he held off, he remained a political embarrassment.

That autumn the first feelers were extended between Whitehall

and Toddington. Through Lord Halifax – now the stage manager of the royal triumph – it was intimated that the King would receive him back – on terms.

Now a whole world of political bargaining had to be compressed into the form of a personal relationship. The prodigal son must cast himself on the mercy of his father's affection. But Halifax drafted the sentences because York must be shown the letter: and Monmouth altered the end because Sidney and Hampden and the others must be saved, and every exclamation of love and pardon was calculated, and examined for concealed traps.

Sometimes things are done which, seeming both expedient and politic, are, in fact, against all wisdom, and this autumnal reconciliation was one of them. Father and son were broken to one another. Charles had never valued his son's honour or believed in his integrity; now he was to demand with love, his utter disgrace. But Monmouth was secretly determined that his actions should qualify his protestations; that he would cheat father and uncle by sticking to his party and his principles. Perhaps he felt the depravity, the prostitution of this relationship; perhaps he shrugged it off with the thought that Shaftesbury would have done the same and that Halifax advised it; and anyway, what was to be done? He did not know then that it would all be useless, that the King would require the reality of his posturings, and that he would burst away from this in indignation. The sordid comedy was played out and nothing was achieved by it.

A wiser man might have realised at once that there was nothing to be gained by this diplomatic countermove. If, for instance, Colonel Rumbold or John Ayloffe had been in Monmouth's place, they might have left at once for Holland, but then they were better men, for their circumstances had made them so.

This year the knell of another funeral was ringing out over the land; echoing through woods and villages, through every parish, bringing its sad clangour of defeat and despair. This was the funeral bell of London.

In the Courts judgement had been pronounced against the ancient charter, and the Tory officers now proposed voluntarily to surrender it. Two years ago, ten thousand citizens would have died in the streets before this could have happened. Now the

tragedy took place with only a solitary voice raised against it. Some unknown patriot wrote a circular letter in which the scorn and dignity still sounds:

'Tis fit for every member of this City to understand, that the Meaning or Intent of such forfeiture of Surrender, is to dissolve the Body Coporate or Politic of the City, to spoil it irrevocably of all its ancient Government, Laws, Customs and Rights, which have been its glory throughout Europe near two thousand years. . . .

Two thousand years – and their passing was marked by the ring taken from the King's own finger and slipped upon that of the new Chief Justice of the King's bench. The 'bloodstone' on the hand of George Jeffreys was the token of submission the master was forced to pay not to the servant, but to the service.

THIRTEEN

THE STRATEGY OF EXILE

I

THE CHRISTMASTIDE of 1684 came to the Hague in a season of unprecedented cold. The ring and scrape of skates festooned the frozen branches with traceless echoes and nightly the harvest of greenish stars blazed in the spinning vision of the revellers. Everyone's life seemed set in the connotation of a new philosophy and not since the days of Frederic Henry had such an alien extravaganza illumined the Dutch night.

M. d'Avaux, the spiteful and hostile eyes of France, watched a tall young woman of twenty-two laugh and slide upon the ice and clutch at the hand of the taller and equally dark young man who was encouraging her. Later he watched the same two open the ball. Every day they could be seen together – they even went to church in each other's company to hear a Huguenot minister preach. 'Nobody could understand how the Prince of Orange, who is the most jealous of men, could put up with all the airs of galanterie which everyone could see existed between the Princess of Orange and M. de Monmouth. . . .'

If the Prince knew what was being said he ignored it. In his opinion there was something essentially amateur about spite, just as there was about moral indignation, and neither were permitted to interrupt his meditations. The lavish and expensive entertainments given in honour of the exile who had been his guest for a year were for a diplomatic purpose. As far as pleasures went they were 'whipped cream for children' – so let the children enjoy them, for the minds of the adults were occupied elsewhere.

The Prince's excellent common sense, which never permitted him to live in any but the most realistic of worlds, now revealed a situation so depressing that it might be diagnosed as a huge memorandum of his failure.

Ten years of struggle against the aggrandisement of France found him and his country in almost as forlorn a position as had

been theirs in '73. That precarious balance, so slightly on the favourable side of utter defeat, which had been attained at the time of his marriage and the Peace of Nimeweguen, had now been lost. An ultimate French hegemony of Europe seemed, if anything, more probable now than ever before. Within France the classical conception of order was being refined by a ruthless suppression of heretical thought. Many Protestants fled the country, some, perhaps hypnotised by success, were converted, others died horribly or were terrorised into submission, while abroad, through a cleverly executed policy of force and legal trickery, one after another of the independent cities and states on France's borders were duly swallowed. *Te Deums* were sung in Strasbourg and in Casale on the Italian frontier; Chinny was occupied by French dragoons, Luxembourg was besieged and the principality of Orange went for ever. Meanwhile, enormous bribes plucked one after another of her allies from the Dutch camp. Five German Electors were bought and - bitter personal humiliation - the Prince's uncle, the Elector of Brandenburg, was one of these. French diplomacy was active in Turkey, for an Emperor with the infidels at the gates of Vienna was in no position to offer resistance to any French claims. In fact, all Europe was once more on the move, quivering like the earth on the slopes of a volcano.

The Prince of Orange was powerless to interfere. The States refused to declare war, as they were pledged to do when Spain defended Luxembourg, and turned chill faces to all his passionate remonstrances. He discovered that the Regents were back at their old game of accepting money from France and published the proof for the world to see; but it accomplished nothing. The sly, admirable faces which could be seen passing up and down the Rosengracht did not show a single blush.

Deserted by her allies, Spain was forced to agree to the treaty of Ratisbon, by which Luxembourg, as well as all her other acquisitions, was retained by France. How long would the victor be content with this? There must have been times when the Prince felt almost overwhelmed by a sense of hopeless futility. He did not command even one small country, he had no money, no forces - none of the components of power with which to bargain - and these he must have, for without them it would be like trying to contain the sea

with straws. This, then, was his problem: how to put himself at the head of forces sufficiently large and resolute to halt the French? The States would not back his foreign policy and while they remained intransigent no European nation would wholeheartedly throw her weight into the alliance. Power resided in Amsterdam, for when it came to wealth, the Orangists were poor relations.

The Prince's extraordinary emotional energy animated all he touched; his personal life was as full of diverse, passionate and tender friendships as his public one was hedged about with the difficult chances of political combinations, and nothing was more complex, nothing a longer or more tantalising chance, than the English succession.

If only England would come into the Alliance, what supplies her Parliament could vote! What men she could put into the field! He must have dreamt of them, of bulldogs in red coats, drilled, trained, commanded by tried Dutch or German generals, marching in thousands against the French.

The death of Lord Shaftesbury and the crushing of the Whig Party, culminating in the proceedings against the boroughs and the forfeiture of London's Charter, were not, from his point of view, altogether unfortunate. That party had never shown a disposition to understand foreign affairs. French tyranny had for them a parochial, revolutionary meaning; they did not think in terms of a strong anti-French policy or of a standing army on the Continent, and in so far as they had Dutch ties, these seemed to be, incongruously perhaps, with Amsterdam.

Of course, the victory of King Charles and of his father-in-law York, was a disaster, but he doubted if it were altogether complete. He had friends in England, and expert cultivator that he was, he could sense in them, like a bulb beneath the winter soil, a seat of strong and growing power. If he did not trust them personally, he trusted their self-interest. He was their only possible choice for the succession, and if they would bid for him, they must pay his price. England and all her assets must come into the alliance.

This long-term hope which, even to his critical eyes, seemed strong and growing, suggested a present policy, which with some *finesse*, might be carried to a successful conclusion. Lord Halifax, now the chief minister of the Crown and the most important

representative of his friends, wished to organise a little palace revolution which would have the effect of removing the now intolerably haughty and aggressive York from his present vice-regal authority to a lower and more distant place, such as Scotland, and instead, to insinuate the Prince of Orange into the Privy Council, and from thence into the general direction of English affairs. In this way, insular prejudices being what they were, some of his 'Dutchness' would get rubbed off in readiness for the day when he must appear as custodian of the nation's liberties. To do this in a perfectly straightforward way was, unfortunately, not possible, for the King had an unconquerable aversion to Orange interference, and would not suffer the idea of his nephew poking his nose into English affairs. And as if to underline this, he had just married his other niece Anne, to a prince in the French camp. However, the sanguine Halifax still thought the business might be managed through taking advantage of the King's two most urgently and clearly expressed wishes: first that his brother should go away, and second that Monmouth should return.

Monmouth now became the hub of this softly whirring wheel. Charles sent him messages, Halifax corresponded with him, William entertained him. Let Monmouth return to Whitehall imagining that Halifax and William would ultimately support his claims, then, on the principle of sticking to those who stuck to him, Monmouth would find a way to introduce his cousin William into English affairs. In fact, Monmouth was to be the unconscious instrument of destiny, or rather, of predestination.

It is quite likely that this campaign of subterfuge seemed to William not only expedient, but actually in his bastard cousin's best interests. His highest ambitions would be disappointed, but he would still retain a comfortable and honourable position as a private nobleman, and eventually, if loyal, as an Allied general. To a man of William's ideas the dangers inherent in this situation would not seem very formidable. He had no belief in the power of popular movements and knew nothing of the wishes or aspirations of any Englishman below the degree of City merchant. Only madmen could seriously wish to see Monmouth king, and in William's view madness might be defined as any political movement which did not originate in aristocratic circles.

Meanwhile, the England of which he knew nothing lay in a state of apathetic depression. People found it almost impossible to believe in the magnitude of the catastrophe which had overtaken them. The fetters of the parish once more fastened their grip upon those who had so rashly assumed their independence to be won. Nine thousand parish churches rose from their cradle of winter branches, or stared between moor and sky, with a re-established and jubilant authority. Never before had Justice and Parson been so vindictive in their enforcement of laws, or so inventive in their improvisations for hounding the heretical freeholder to poverty or prison. 'Fanatic' was their cruellest epithet, expressing all they loathed and feared, 'non-resistance' their highest compliment, the containment of all their hope of finally establishing their authority.

In village and town men could not remember such a time as this, not in the first flush of the sixteen-sixties, not even earlier. For now while they lived from one day to the next, between Tuesday and Saturday, the charters of the boroughs were declared forfeit or yielded by traitors. The King could put in his own nominees, and see that men of his party were elected to any future Parliament.

Undoubtedly the extraordinary variation in the types of English self-government played into the hands of the powerful, counter-attacking minority. This was particularly true of those corporations that were self-elected. Many loopholes would be presented to the cunning enemy, and the numberless differences between one locality and another meant that the element of surprise attack was difficult to overcome. The whole fabric of local government had evolved piecemeal down the centuries; its patches of democracy were haphazard and unplanned, and though, during the Whig parliaments, they had been brilliantly used by a revolutionary class, they were not organised to withstand a concerted attack from above. Resistance, on the whole, was spasmodic and ineffectual. Some towns were the scenes of riots, little bouts of unorganised rage that broke out on some trivial occasion, an anniversary perhaps, or an accident. The temper of the people was sullen and restless and many must have heard the mocking echo of that old defiant cry, 'All true Protestants are in danger!'

The unity of action between vestry or council and the London political and parliamentary party was gone. Nearly every political

organiser from the West and most from London were in exile, and this was a fact of more importance to the party than the executions of the noblemen or the absence of Monmouth, for it made concerted action of any kind immensely difficult. Information was also scarce; the chief London printers were in Amsterdam and conditions in the City meant it was extremely difficult to keep alive even a feeble trickle of party literature. Men had to go by rumours, and the triumphant boasting of the enemy is always disheartening.

II

It may be supposed that the large community of exiles in Amsterdam -- a colony of dispossessed revolutionaries amounting to several hundred -- were not particularly happy. Scots, English, Republicans, Monmouthites, they all had their eyes straining to England and lived for the arrival of the packet with its quota of news.

The majority, who had arrived at the time of the Rye House disclosures, must have lived vicariously through a drama which compressed into eighteen months happenings and experiences that were enough for a lifetime. After the summer executions and the forfeit of the City's Charter would have come the rumours that Monmouth had betrayed the party and become reconciled to his father. Then, while they still waited to see if this were really a betrayal or a clever tactic, the reconciliation was all over and Monmouth had fled to Brussels. They would have heard later of the last panic-stricken interview which took place between Charles and Monmouth in the royal bedchamber. A confession had been cajoled from Monmouth, which he suddenly realised might be used as evidence against Hampden. He had gone to his father, accused him of conspiring with the Duke of York to ruin him, of bringing him back 'to do a job'. For once the King was shaken to a rage of honesty. 'Why not?' he asked brutally. His own uncle, Gaston d'Orleans, had bought his reconciliation with his friends' lives. Why shouldn't he, Monmouth, do what his betters had done and count himself lucky? But Monmouth got the paper back and left for Holland on the next boat.

The execution of Sidney and the trial of Hampden which followed, would have convinced the exiles in Amsterdam that he had narrowly escaped from a trap. Not that the North Sea was a

guarantee of safety: English agents were active and in August poor Tom Armstrong had been seized, put on a ship and carried to London. Jeffreys tried him. 'What are your ordinary days of execution?' he asked the Keeper of Newgate. 'Wednesdays and Fridays, your Lordship', replied the official; and two days later, with as little ceremony as if they were cutting up a butcher's carcass, Tom was hanged, drawn and quartered. In refusing to grant him the privilege of being beheaded, to which, though not a nobleman, he could lay some claim as cousin to the Princess of Orange, the King indulged his private vengeance against the man whom his son had loved.

Naturally, the exiles kept in touch with their friends in England and spent their days in speculating about the future. Probably they kept much to themselves, and to young men like Wade the casual and sophisticated toleration of Amsterdam would have seemed alien and cold. From their leader, Monmouth, they were separated by all that divided Orange from the States. They would hear of him moving in aristocratic luxury, from the Hague to Soesdyck or Dieren, and no doubt, being human, they resented it. All their thoughts were of England, and being fanatic nationalists, they were blind to continental developments. Consequently they never came to any real understanding of the fundamental Orange policy, which was in the long run to have such fatal effects on their own hopes.

Monmouth, whose opportunities for study were so much greater than theirs, also remained in a state of ignorance as to the Prince's real ambitions. He never seems to have comprehended that the Orange 'common cause' was the cause against French hegemony and one that was to be pursued at all costs and by any means. In a general way, of course, both he and his party disapproved of French aggression and at some distant date were prepared to play a part in halting it; but their immediate concern was England.

Some months had now passed since Monmouth's last interview with his father and his natural optimism had reasserted itself. In spite of every thing that had happened, his hopes were once more centred on getting back to England. No doubt in the secret correspondence with Whitehall 'L', who was Halifax, dwelt on 29's (the King's) dislike of the ascendant power of York and Low, if he could be removed to Scotland or Brussels, Monmouth might return

in safety to a place of honour. The tormenting thought would of course suggest itself that if the reconciliation was not effected soon, he might not be on the spot if an emergency arose. By emergency he would mean his father's death, which was now generally expected in the not very distant future. Indeed, so unbridled was the triumph of the Yorkist party that the impression got abroad in the courts of Europe that they would not wait for ever, but that the Jesuits would find means to improve on nature. Probably he argued that if only he could get back, revive old associations, and above all, get his uncle sent to Scotland or Flanders, then he and his party might really hope to enter into possession of the inheritance. Not only Halifax and William, but Charles also was encouraging him in these sanguine hopes and the letters of his father were full of caresses and promises.

In November 1684 he went secretly to London and saw the King privately. The interview was apparently a great success: he warned Charles of the rumours of a plot against his life¹ and won his assent to most of his demands. York must be sent away, he himself would return to England, and a Parliament be summoned. His position would further be supported by the friendship of William, with whom he imagined he had concluded a private political alliance of mutual assistance.

¹ Some time later James Welwood, physician to the Prince of Orange, saw 'by an accident' Monmouth's diary, which had been found on him after Sedgemoor. Presumably it had been left behind by James II at the time of his flight. Welwood copied out parts of it and suppressed the rest. He says: 'A great many dark passages there are in it, and some clear enough, that shall be eternally buried for me; and perhaps it had been for King James's Honour to have committed them to the flames as Julius Caesar is said to have done upon a like occasion.'

The entries he copied are pretty regular from 13th October 1683 to 27th November, showing that Monmouth kept a consistent though not very full diary; then there is a gap of over a year till 19th December 1684. The reference to Julius Caesar immediately suggests murder and as it is known that Monmouth went to London in November 1684 ostensibly to warn his father that there was a plot on foot to kill him, it is to be supposed that the diary contained passages which suggest that York was implicated in this plot; or at least (which, of course, is not at all the same thing) that Monmouth believed he was. Again we may note, except for one small slip, all references to Orange are conspicuously absent. What became of this diary remains a mystery. Probably someone repaired James II's omission and burnt it.

In fact, the new year looked like being his Year of Miracles; as indeed it would have been, if it had been 1683 instead of 1685; a little difference overlooked in the enthusiasm of the moment, but one which unfortunately changed everything.

Men pay great penalties for failing to interpret a situation correctly; but it is easy to see how Monmouth, with his generosity, honesty and common sense, failed to understand the profound changes which had taken place in the last eighteen months.

Of course, if the same conditions existed now as had existed before the Rye House Plot, Charles would never have dreamt of having his son back on the terms they had arranged; or if he had done so, would William have shown him even a qualified friendship? Both intended, and no doubt both felt morally justified, to delude Monmouth for their own ends. Again, a cleverer man might have known this and still gone back. If luck, in the shape of time, held, he would have plotted and intrigued night and day to revive all the organisation of '83 and create some sort of underground force capable of seizing power when the moment came. But there is nothing to justify the supposition that any such calculated plan was in Monmouth's head. He was too hopeful to think it necessary.

It was not expected that the King would long survive his victory. His years were beginning to tell. He was, says Oldmixon, sullen and cruel, and Halifax observed that he was now past the delights of sensuality. He kept a strong box full of gold under his bed and confided this secret to Bruce, whose reverent and uncomprehending eyes could never discern beyond the image of the King, the haunted figure of Charles Stuart still uneasily on the run after all these years. The courtiers noticed he repeated the old stories about his escape after Worcester at even more tedious length than before, and dozed in his chair after dinner. They were all watching him and wondering how long he would last.

The new men he had raised to administer the course of revenge, Laurence Hyde, Godolphin, Jeffreys, were drawn into the orbit of the impatient and healthy brother. At last, after all these years, that 'beloved crown' was so close it could almost be touched. And it was drawing nearer, not shrouded or dimmed, but in a very solstice of monarchy. The pre-eminence of the French king, the crushing of the rebellious party in England, all suggested to James

that the time was come when the *grand design* could be put into execution and his brother justify his somewhat tortuous and evasive history as God's vice-regent in England. Why did he delay? What excuse had he for delaying now?

The King appears never to have argued with his brother. Sometimes he scored off him, sometimes, though rarely, he commanded him, but in a general way he seems to have wryly conceded his moral ascendancy. He was a Catholic and knew his brother to be a better one, and the phantoms of his sister and mother, indeed of all the men and women of his faith, reproached him for that practical sense which so frequently forced him to play the part of an unwilling traitor. Even now, at the apex of his sovereignty, with men like Jeffreys to administer the law, he could not achieve the majesty implicit in those words 'ought' and 'should'.

It was his misfortune that he knew to whom his victory was due: it was won for him by the English upper classes and the Church of England, and being a sceptic, he suspected that the criminality of resisting the King depended to a great extent on who resisted. Still, this was good enough. His youth was past, his strength was waning, and between dinner and bed he had no desire for anything more than a little backstairs intrigue, a more comfortable arrangement of his earthly possessions. The days when, with tears in his eyes, he would pledge himself to a crusade were gone for ever, and his present achievement, satisfactory as it was, would compensate him for those grandeurs, once so keenly desired, but which could now be yielded without reluctance. In short, he had no intention of being swept forward by his brother's party into an attack which would have as its object, the implementing of the whole Franco-Jesuit scheme of Minette's treaty. Yet it was towards this logical conclusion of his life's work that he was being pushed; and would be pushed still further unless he took some counter action.

His counsellor in this difficulty was Halifax. Although this old Roman philosopher was perpetually tempted to leave the world, that strong sense of moral obligation which had always distinguished him directed that he cling as tenaciously to office as any ordinary minister at Court. His *Character of a Trimmer* had just been published anonymously, and its Tory 'moderation' seemed the most infuriating of insults to the York party.

Halifax and his friends had their own game to play – not quite the same as the King's, of course – but near enough to it for a policy of constructive cross-purposes. Whether he ever hinted at his main aim – that of bringing the Prince of Orange into the Government – is not known, but it is unlikely. He was too shrewd for that. The King intended no reversal of his policy, only a brake upon its further progress. If the worst came to the worst, and the Duchess of York bore no living children, he would prefer his niece, Anne, to succeed before her elder sister.

However, if the introduction of William into affairs could not be contemplated, that of Monmouth could. His presence had always been keenly desired by his father, who was fully alive to the potential embarrassment of his son at liberty, and his recall would be something in the nature of a public declaration that he was satisfied with things as they were. It would show his brother York that he must be prepared to call a halt and reassure Protestant opinion. Yet in himself Monmouth was nothing. That was the singular beauty of this son who was not to be his heir. His political existence depended on his party, and his party was broken. So let James come home and be pleasant again. Let him race and hunt and dance and fill the empty rooms.

Even the most unblushing egotism does not preclude a sense of pleasure in the existence of another human being, a sense that may sometimes even pass for affection. No doubt Lord Halifax was fond of the daughter whose fate, if she married a drunkard, a whoremaster, a fool or a tyrant, he could still contemplate with equanimity, and no doubt Charles had some feeling for the son whose honour, and even life, he was prepared to risk for his own comfort.

It was certainly not love like this that he had for his brother. No warmth or sweetness glowed in his heart when he thought of him, but only an acute sense of his identity, a sense of responsibility such as can never be cast off, for it represents the one imperishable love that is as strong for another as for oneself. His brother was his heir, his dynasty, and so his thoughts were all for him and his future as they had never been for his son.

He said one day to a man he could trust to understand, 'I am weary of travelling and am resolved to go abroad no more. But

when I am dead and gone I know not what my brother will do. I am much afraid that when he comes to wear the crown he will be obliged to travel again. And yet I will take care to leave my kingdoms to him in peace, wishing he may long keep them so. But this hath all of my fears, little of my hopes and less of my reason.'

Certainly neither fear nor hope was centred on Monmouth's future. 'Don't forget to wind the clock. . . .' 'Don't let poor Nelly starve. . . .' Such were the directions of the King's thoughts, such his injunctions. But the son merits neither thought nor injunction.

So the scene was set for the final intrigue of that long and not unproductive reign. The King and Halifax had made their plans and were already anticipating an outcry of indignation from York. What they did not guess was that their plans were known. Rumours of the impending change were circulating at Versailles, as well as at the Hague, and no doubt through the French Ambassador, the Duke of York had been warned. It is likely that he and his friends read into the recall of Monmouth much more than was actually intended. None of them had ever quite trusted the King and any check to this long-awaited accession to power would seem to them intolerable. For the Duke of York regarded Monmouth as a criminal, and the idea that he himself should be banished to Edinburgh while this creature returned flaunting in triumph to Whitehall was enough to enrage him. The explanation – if it was ever given to him – that the King was doing this for the Duke's own good, would have been rejected as ludicrous. His wife and his friends, all of whom were known for their intolerant and tyrannical natures, no doubt did their best to foster his legitimate sense of outrage.

On the evening of the 1st February the King went to bed as usual, after supping off some meat broth. Bruce and Tom Killigrew, who were in attendance, slept on truckle beds in the King's chamber. Bruce was wakeful. The King's collection of clocks kept up a carillon of different chimes, and the great fire of Scotch coals crumbled in ash and flickering light. Usually the King slept well, but tonight he was restless, and when morning came, Bruce, who was as sensitive as a dog to his master's moods, was already full of a vague foreboding.

One glance justified his fears; the King was not well. His face

was pale and he muttered something in French to someone who was not there. However, he got up. Then presently when he sat down to be shaved, he had a stroke. It was eight years since his first seizure, and this spasm was by far more severe. After some hours consciousness returned; he could talk and think coherently and he was not paralysed.

Whatever it was that Charles died of, it was not apoplexy, for there were no more seizures. It is possible that the doctors' remedies killed him. A drastic course of emetics, purgatives, blood-letting and plasters might well have caused the spasms of intense pain and the periods of coma that followed, until finally his tough and resilient body was worn out. On the other hand, it cannot be denied that the symptoms from which he suffered are also compatible with arsenic poisoning.

'They would never kill me to make you King.' Only a few months before Charles had made this bitter joke to his brother; but he may have been mistaken as to who 'they' were.

It was certainly widely believed – and not only by the ignorant – that he was assassinated by the Jesuits. Fifty years later, Halifax's grandson stated categorically: 'King Charles was poisoned'; and, indeed, two stories current at this time appear to have been accepted by the two succeeding generations. One was that Lord Essex was murdered, and the other that the King was killed to prevent Monmouth being recalled.

That these were partisan beliefs does not necessarily invalidate them, and modern historians who reject the idea of the King being poisoned would appear to do so on the grounds that he obviously did have an apoplectic stroke, as no poison then known could induce symptoms characteristic of such a seizure. Certainly the King showed unmistakable signs of recovery and the physicians declared him out of danger; but there may well have been those who could not endure to have their hopes so suddenly raised and then dashed down, and who were quick to seize some opportunity of introducing arsenic – a poison fairly easily obtained – into one of the King's medicines. Consciences were elastic when it came to the Divine Will and even virtuous men found it possible to justify actions that might seem somewhat equivocal.

If this theory of poisoning were so, and by a final stupendous

irony the one impossible part of the Popish Plot came true in the end, the victim, in his heart, would not have wished the murderers discovered. On his deathbed all the power of the old philosophy reasserted itself; he forgot his ease and his pleasure, and his son. He let it all go; fading away through the circlet of that crown to which he had so successfully clung through a varied and difficult life.

It is not to be wondered that the watchers wished it were all over. Clear away the bedding, the body and the medicines! Get rid of the dogs, shake out the plumes, make up the fire, for the next occupant is waiting. King at last! What sweet raptures did not mingle with exhaustion in James's fifty-two-year-old heart. It was too much; he wept. The crown was his before breakfast on the morning of the 5th February.

The news, which took nearly three weeks to penetrate the frozen harbours across the North Sea, reached Monmouth during the last ball that he was ever to attend. William, and his indispensable friend and adviser Bentinck, read the letters from England in their private cabinet. Louis had a viceroy in Whitehall at last.

The Prince's nature was fortified against disappointment, and he had long accepted the fact that public affairs in England must always turn to his disadvantage at critical moments. But for Monmouth it was different. He expected to master life, to spring God knows how on to some sunny eminence. He hoped - and now every prospect was dashed. For nearly three weeks he had been living in a fool's paradise.

Though it may be unprofitable, it is none the less interesting to speculate on what would have happened if the King had died after Monmouth's recall. Presumably, he and Halifax would have presided over the deathbed, for even if the Duke of York killed horses all the way, he could not have arrived from Edinburgh in time. However, we may be tolerably certain it would have made no real difference. Monmouth was no Catherine of Russia, and Halifax and the Council would have held the fort till the legal heir arrived; from their point of view, Monmouth's days of usefulness would have been over. Probably he would have retired temporarily to his new house in Soho Square, and had he been so unwise as to remain in England, would almost certainly have been arrested on some

excuse—for it is not likely that his behaviour would have been altogether prudent or acquiescent—and in due course, after a ceremonious execution, officially lamented by William, he would have passed, along with Russell and Sidney, into the respectable upper classes of the Whig martyrology. In fact, his death would have been as edifying as it was meaningless.

Weeping all night in an abandon of grief, he little knew how much less cruel fate was to be than he imagined. In the five months that remained to him before the postponed sentence was carried out, the part he had to play would illumine his life with a flame that would be visible for generations.

III

The final disappearance of the elder brother and the accession of the younger meant an immediate realignment of political forces. After an exchange of stony courtesies, the Trimmer Tories, headed by Halifax, passed into political retirement, while in the Republic both the States and the Stadtholder were alone with the anxious foreboding which the new situation created.

One fact was accepted by common consent in all parties and courts: the immediate expulsion of the Duke of Monmouth from every serious political consideration. This embarrassing link between William and Halifax had now snapped and all traces of its existence must be removed.

It is interesting to wonder if 'L' ever wrote again. If so, it must have been only to tell Monmouth with all the directness that a cypher could conceal, to keep as far away as possible. This was also William's advice. He went to Monmouth's bedchamber in his nightgown and offered him £100 if he would go to the Emperor or to the Swedes and adopt the career of a mercenary-general. They could not get him out of their way quickly enough, for whatever course affairs took, there was now no room for interlopers from below.

Towards the colony of exiles in Amsterdam the Hague preserved a watchful silence. If they chose to hold their peace and wait on Orange intentions, well and good; for a contingency might arise when their influence in England would be helpful. If, on the other hand, they chose another course, then they must count on the

hostility of those wealthy and powerful classes which might now be described as Orange-Whigs. The long afternoon of prevarication and preparation was drawing to a close and the time of direct action beginning. Only the coolest and toughest need enter for this contest.

Fortunately the Prince was both tough and cool. He got Monmouth out of the United Provinces into Brussels, he made every correct and suitable advance to his father-in-law, and he turned a blind eye to the exiles in Amsterdam. Here, as far as he was concerned, the matter rested. To wait and see was the Anglo-Dutch interim policy.

For generations posterity has hedged in the exiles and their final effort with epithets such as 'ill-judged', 'rash', 'doomed', almost as if at that time they must have known the preordained course of history, and yet out of mere perversity proceeded with their undignified scuffle. Did they not appreciate the majestic destiny of the Prince of Orange? Or stand awed before the marvels of a hundred years of Whig rule? Did none of them understand that a *petit-bourgeois* revolution cannot succeed, that society must develop in some other way? Apparently not. In 1685 their plans seemed sound, decisive, practical, leading to actions which would determine the destiny of England.

A little over eighteen months in Amsterdam had not changed the conviction they had been ready to act upon in 1683: namely, that the English people were prepared to rise in achievement of their party's aims. The disaster of that summer was looked upon as an unfortunate mishap, which did not, however, affect the fundamental issue. All the working leaders of the party – those who had close connections with the people, as distinct from a few individualistic aristocrats such as Lord Grey – never seem to have had any doubts as to the mass support which would be theirs. From the closest personal experience they knew the almost universal character of the support which the Whig parliaments had enjoyed. 'All true Englishmen' were for them. 'True Englishmen' comprised the small producer and the rural labourer, the craftsmen and the 'mechanicks' of town and country, the middle merchants and the minor Puritan gentry. It was firmly believed by the party's leaders that this class, if correctly led and organised, could achieve political

power *by itself*. They did not regard the adherence of the great country magnates and the very wealthy City men as necessary to their success, though they believed and hoped that some of these would join them.

Temporarily forced to abandon the rising in '83, they had been waiting from month to month for a favourable opportunity. The accession of James II was, of course, the one event which every Whig who had been for the Exclusion Bill was determined should never occur. They did not need to wait and see what would happen next, for it was not in their interest to deceive themselves. Popery and arbitrary government had come to power in England.

It would be a counsel of folly and weakness to postpone action any longer. At home people were awaiting the arms and leadership that the exiles alone could bring. What the exiles did not realise was that in the upper circles of London and the Hague, dismay at the accession of James was more than counterbalanced by horror at the thought of precipitate action by 'warm men', for the vision of such men went directly to the hearts of their countrymen. None of them could let England slip into the waters of darkness for want of stretching out a hand to save her. This seems to have been the general opinion of all the exiles in Amsterdam. The differences between them were over the means to be employed, not upon the ends, which were immediate invasion and rebellion.

There was, for instance, the natural difference between the Scottish and English. The Scots were the smaller and less politically developed of the two groups and owned as their leader the chief of the Campbells, the Duke of Argyle, a man with a difficult personality and of no outstanding capacity. However, the English, led by Ferguson, who, though a Scotsman by birth, had been almost exclusively associated with English politics, behaved with unusual tact and forbearance. As Ferguson expressed it to Lord Grey, 'A perfect unity among us was absolutely necessary to preserve the liberties of three Kingdoms, and the Protestant religion in them, and by consequence in all Europe. And . . . the procuring a meeting between the Duke of Monmouth and the Lord Argyll that there might be an amicable end of all differences and we might jointly apply ourselves to the redemption of our several countries.'

Ferguson is revealed as a man of unswerving purpose. He had

formulated his 'bottom' four or five years before and he was still convinced that it was the only one that would bring success. Monmouth was the natural leader, and in this view he seems to have been supported by the majority of the English. The Scots, however, were cautious on this point.

It was now, presumably, several months since Monmouth and the exiles had met, and to re-establish contact with him was the first necessity. To leave the protection of Amsterdam was dangerous, as poor Armstrong had learnt, and Ferguson seems to have sought the assistance of Grey.

Adversity had not improved this nobleman. Living in poverty among Dutch burghers was very different from being a daring Whig propagandist on £40,000 a year, and his own account of this talk with Ferguson is flavoured with a certain sourness and malice. After all, he seems to imply, he and Monmouth are noblemen, different in kind from the middle-class outlaw, they can retreat to the lofty spheres of European courts and enjoy an epicurean retirement. They were not concerned with this tedious and possibly vulgar political broil from necessity but by choice. Ferguson was warned. He never trusted Grey after this, and sought other intermediaries through which to reach Monmouth.

On being turned out of the Hague, Monmouth had gone to Brussels; but the Spanish King had given orders to his governor to seize him and deliver him to the English, so he left hurriedly – Henrietta, who had been ill all the winter, was given a few days' grace – and went first to Antwerp and then to Gouda, a small quiet town where they lived in a very modest manner.

The winter continued very cold and the snow lingered late into March. He had no money – he had refused William's offer of £100 – and was an outlaw with a lodging waiting for him in the Tower. Nevertheless, it must be supposed that the Dutch bricks had a warm solidity and that Henrietta's income could provide fires, a clean hearth, clay pipes, books and happiness.

Perhaps, this period, when so much seemed familiar, yet so much was different, appeared longer than it really was. It was like a repetition of the pattern of his childhood – seclusion with a woman he loved in a world dangerous with unknown enemies. He was happy during this time – not with the old ebullient joy of high

spirits and passion, but in quite a different way. He read and thought, and realised all he did not know; and that seed of melancholy hidden in his heart began to grow. His appearance changed. He grew thin, and the conquering, unthinking face of the early portraits, lengthened into that sad and subtle curve from cheekbone to jaw which distinguished so many of the men and women of his race.

The most mature letter that Monmouth ever wrote belongs to this period. It forms part of the correspondence between himself and the exiles and is supposed to have been addressed to Argyle, though it is more probable it was written to Thomas Dare, the Taunton goldsmith, a man whom Monmouth loved, and in whose house the meeting between Scots and English subsequently took place.¹

I Receiv'd both yours together this Morning, and cannot delay you my Answer longer than this Post, tho' I am afraid it will not please you so much as I heartily wish it may. I have weigh'd all your Reasons, and every thing that you and my other Friends have writ me upon that Subject; and have done it with the greatest Inclinations to follow your Advice, and without Prejudice. You may well believe I have had time enough to reflect sufficiently upon our present State especially since I came hither. But whatever way I turn my Thoughts I find insuperable Difficulties. Pray do not think it is an effect of Melancholy for that was never my greatest Fault, when I tell you, 'That in these three Weeks Retirement in this Place, I have not only look'd back,

¹ This letter, together with the key of the cypher came, after the Revolution, into the hands of James Welwood, an English physician and private secretary to the Prince of Orange. He says it was given him by Mr Spence, Argyle's private secretary, who had been put to the torture in Scotland to make him reveal the cypher, but he had refused. It was, says Welwood, written to 'one that afterwards lost his life in his quarrel'. Presumably Welwood read the lines in cypher and omitted them because they reflected upon—or might be supposed to reflect upon—some person who must remain unblemished. The irresistible inference is that they concerned the Prince of Orange—perhaps contained some news or advice by Orange which showed he was a good deal more privy to the affairs of the exiles than was ever publicly admitted. This, of course, would also account for Spence's staunchness under King James's torture.

but forward; and the more I consider on present Circumstances, I think them still the more desperate, unless some unforeseen Accident fall out, which I cannot divine nor hope for. [Here followed sixteen lines in cypher which have since vanished]. Judge then what we are to expect, in case we should venture upon any such Attempt at this time. Its to me a vain Argument, that our Enemies are scarce yet well settled, when you consider that Fear in some and Ambition in others, have brought them to comply; and that the Parliament being made up for the most part of Members that formerly run our Enemies down, they will be ready to make their Peace as soon as they can, rather than hazard themselves upon an uncertain Bottom. I gave you but Hints of what, if I had time, I would write you at more length: But that I may not seem obstinate in my own Judgment, or neglect the Advice of my Friends, I will meet you at the Time and Place appointed. But for God's sake think in the meantime of the Improbabilities that lie naturally in our way; and let us not by struggling with our Chains make them straighter and heavier. For my part I'll run the hazard of being thought any thing rather than a rash inconsiderate Man. And to tell you my Thoughts without disguise, I am now so much in love with a retire'd life that I am never like to be fond of *making a Bustle in the World again*. I have much more to say, but the Post cannot stay; and I refer the rest till meeting, being entirely yours.

It can be seen that he had gauged the situation well, especially as regards the exaggerated loyalty of their former allies, now sitting demurely in King James's Parliament. On the positive side, however, his plans were a little vague. His own desire was to spend the summer in Sweden, to continue collecting money and arms and to prepare for an attempt the following spring. But when he went to meet the other exiles in Rotterdam, arguments were put forward which demolished his objections. It is easy to guess what they were. Waiting, they no doubt urged, would only give the enemy leisure to establish his rule, and in that fatal lapse of time Englishmen would grow disheartened. Their chances would deteriorate, not improve. Such arguments would find an ally in his conscience: it was he who had insisted on waiting when Shaftesbury was hot for action; and what had they got by it? The block or the gallows

for many good men. Perhaps his good sense was not so impartial as he supposed, and might be actuated by a selfish desire to retreat from destiny, rather than join with his comrades and share their fortunes. Monmouth was no egotist to insist on his opinions being right when all the men he knew and admired were against them. Whatever persuaded him, his consent once given was not reluctant. Perhaps his belief in their cause had grown with his understanding.

The Scots asked him bluntly what his personal ambitions were – if he could prove that his mother was married to his father? He answered that he had been able to do so and could yet, if certain people were still alive. (A curious and tantalising answer which suggests that the witness – or witnesses – were living in England. Margaret Gosfight, perhaps.) But, he implied, this was no longer of any great importance to him. The bottom that he and they were on was the sound one of '81. He did not intend to claim the crown unless his friends advised it, and then he would lay it down in the hands of the representatives of the people and accept any position they cared to bestow upon him.

He gave these assurances with the utmost sincerity, and what had seemed so difficult at first – a firm and unsuspecting union between the English and the Scots – was satisfactorily achieved.

The plan of action was intrinsically the same as that of 1683 – landings and simultaneous risings in Scotland and the West Country. The forces in the West, led by Monmouth, would march on London and be greeted by the City in arms. Cheshire would also be in revolt and the Government's forces, hopelessly divided, would abandon resistance. This was the broad strategy of the campaign; tactical variations would be decided by maturing circumstances. The reports from agents in the West and the secret, exploratory visits of Dare and Matthews, Tom Armstrong's son-in-law, were extremely favourable. The country was waiting and impatient. The news from London, however, was more mixed.

Major Wildman had been released from the Tower some time before, and he and his fellow republicans still honeycombed the City. They had been lucky in '83, grazing the outside edge of treason, and consequently they were now advantageously placed for conspiracy. In a sense they looked upon themselves as the heirs of the underground organisation – a claim which the others did

not recognise. The attitude of the exiled high command was that they not only had the right to demand the Republicans' support, but that the ubiquitous Major and his friends now had an opportunity to redeem their rather evasive actions of '83.

Wildman, however, was by no means prepared to give his unqualified support. In this he disagreed with his brother-in-law Disney, who seems to have been a steady Monmouthite. Wildman had not been idle during the months of liberty and had managed to persuade many substantial citizens to support his views. Ironically enough, Hampden, for whose life Monmouth had shown such tender care, was now one of these. Ostensibly what they wanted – indeed insisted upon – was a republic, but it was significant that although their group contained so many wealthy men, it commanded little mass support. Their 'pure' republicanism, ideologically to the left of a limited monarchy, was already taking on an Orange tinge. However, Wildman was a deep and cautious thinker. He did not want to be wholly out of the undertaking, lest it should, after all, be successful; so he compromised in his correspondence, sending ambiguous messages such as one saying that Henry VII had invaded England with only a hundred and forty men, and confined his actions to making careful enquiries among his London associates.

Monmouth and the English were desperate for money. Argyle, who had estates in Friesland, had been able to get together £10,000 for fitting out his expedition, but the English were quite literally penniless. What they needed from Wildman was financial help, or to be more explicit, £4,000; but this they were not to get. Of all the wealth stored in the City – the gold that had once been so freely poured out for bonfires and green ribands – not a single pound found its way across the North Sea. The people were 'cold', explained Wildman through his messenger; the gentry might be 'offended'; it was 'madness to pull down an old house before they knew how to build a new one'. In fact, any and every excuse was made to sit splitting Utopian hairs in comfort, while spring swept the winter horizon and the last of Argyle's stores were boarded on his ships. No wonder Monmouth broke out in a rage and declared that Wildman deliberately obstructed everything. 'He thinks by keeping his own purse strings fast to hinder me in this thing'; but

in this the Major was mistaken, 'for he would make Wildman hang with him or fight for it with him'. Possibly one or two of those who were old enough meditated on the fact that while Rainborough had found an early and a bloody grave, Wildman had lived and prospered.

A hundred thousand pounds would not have been too much to supply the necessities for such an expedition (a few years later William had twice that sum) but even after collecting all they could and selling all they had, the English succeeded in raising a little less than £9,000.

About £3,000 was subscribed by small contributions and by Dutch and English sympathisers: Locke, for instance, contributed £500: Monmouth's jewels and plate fetched about £3,000, and Henrietta and her mother pledged their jewels for £2,700. Not a single penny did Monmouth manage to extract from his English income. His Duchess preserved a glacial silence – which was perhaps not surprising under the circumstances – and even his horses he never saw again. Almost everything would have to be raised in England when they got there, and it was this necessity that determined the course the future must take.

It was clearly impossible to land and march directly on London. Monmouth therefore planned to stay a month or six weeks in the West, gathering, training and arming his men. In a message to his friends Delamere and Brandon in Cheshire, he said he hoped they would not take it ill that he could not be with them there, but they being men of quality, were less in need of him than was the West where there were no men experienced in commanding an army.

He was not rushing into this with his old impetuosity; he knew what lay ahead of him, and with this knowledge there evidently came calmness. Wildman said – and in such a matter would have spoken upon his honour – that secret stores of arms were already distributed. Money, he hoped, would come to them on landing; but fundamentally the whole enterprise was based upon the assumption that there would be mass desertions from the government. They had come to lead a revolution, not an armed invasion.

This was why it was absolutely essential that they should be agreed upon a programme which should be clearly stated and made widely known. After much debate a programme was drawn

up and a proclamation formulated. This was an extremely interesting document as, with the exception of one provision concerning the hereditary nobility, it follows almost exactly the six-point programme which the Left wing of the party laid down as a basis for action at the time of the Rye House Plot.

It is said that Ferguson wrote the manifesto – probably after consultation with the others – and that it was then debated by both Scots and English and after some amendments, was approved. The Scots then drew up a manifesto of their own based on this one, but with certain alterations in the political clauses. Fundamentally, however, both manifestoes were in agreement, so whatever Wildman's group in London might decide, the exiles were now resolved on a common policy.

The original manifesto starts with a short preamble on the social contract, which is described as being, 'chosen and submitted to by Men for the Peace, Happiness, and security of the *Governed* and not for the private Interest and personal Greatness of those that Rule'. It goes on to postulate the theory, beloved by all English revolutionaries, and one in which psychological insight compensates for inaccuracy, that England had been traditionally a limited Monarchy, so that any advance towards democracy is, in fact, only a return to 'old English government'. 'For several years past', says the document, their religion had been undermined by Popish councils and their privileges ravished by fraud and violence; in particular, the life of 'the present *Usurper* hath been but one continued conspiracy against the Reformed Religion and Rights of the Nation'.

Then follows a list of the 'crimes' of James II, including incidentally all the political sins of Charles II, of which James was thought to be the instigator. This tremendous accumulation of grievances, which the party and the people had against Stuart government in general, was now concentrated in the figure of one man – the King, whom the manifesto accused personally of having caused the assassinations of the Earl of Essex and of his brother Charles.

Having defined what they were against, the document then proceeds to 'proclaim and publish what we aim at'. First, a limited monarchy, whose powers are defined by law: 'though we are not come into the *field* to introduce *Anarchy and Confusion*, or for

laying aside any *essential part of the old English government*; yet our purpose and resolutions are, to reduce things to that *temperament* and *Balance* that *future Rulers* may remain able to do all the good that can be either desired or expected from them; and it may not be in their power to invade the *rights* and infringe the *Liberties* of the People'.

Second, liberty of conscience and equal rights for all Protestants. In practice this would mean the end of Anglican rule and, in many areas where they were the majority, the raising to civic power of the Dissenting classes. Roman Catholics were promised the right to worship as they pleased, though the inference is that they were to be excluded from civil administration.

Third, annual Parliaments which could not be prorogued or dissolved except by their consent.

Fourth, the judges and officers of the Law were to be prevented from repeating their past crimes in the King's service and were to be subjected to the approbation of Parliament.

Fifth, all the old charters were to be restored as they were before the forfeitures, seizures and surrenders of Charles II's reign.

Sixth, there was to be no standing army except by the authority of Parliament.

Seventh, although the Duke of Monmouth can prove satisfactorily that he is the legitimate son of Charles II, he does not at present insist upon his title and leaves the determination thereof to 'the Wisdom, Justice and Authority of a Parliament legally chosen, and acting with freedom'.

The implications of this manifesto are obvious. It states the claim of the Country Party, that the House of Commons should be the seat and fountain of power, and in restoring the Charters and freeing the Dissenters, determines that the freeholder and citizen shall remain the electors of this House. In fact, a transference of power would be established within the country, and the formula of a limited monarchy would enable this to be done with the minimum of difficulty. There is no evidence to show that Wildman's republican group had any practical plan to equal this in its proposals for extending democratic rights.

The snow was gone at last, the exiles brisk with hope, for, of all the years that ever had been, or ever would be, this one, 1685, promised to be theirs. They were the survivors of seven years of struggle, the ones who had lived to snatch, at last, the heritage of action.

There was that 'good and gallant man', Richard Rumbold, who, as a boy of nineteen, had sat his charger beneath the scaffold of Charles I, and Abraham Holmes, Ffoulkes, Venner -- all old Ironsides who were now to command regiments distinguished by the ancient colours, green, white, yellow, which in their youth had won such renown. There were the younger generation for whom this would be the first experience of war, men from the West such as Wade, Battiscombe, the two Hewlings, Darc, Babbington, Vincent, political leaders from London such as the Goodenoughs and the all-important ministers. Every one of the hundred or so men who were to sail with Monmouth were now at work; some gathering and storing arms, some making journeys to England to prepare against the day. They slipped into London with news for Delamere to go to his Cheshire estates and be ready to raise the country, and from there journeyed into the West. An agent called Jones was entrusted with the crucial message: that the West was to be the scene of the landing and Taunton the rendezvous. He sailed with sealed orders, Monmouth saying -- surely with a smile -- 'I do by you as princes do by their admirals when they send them upon any considerable expedition'.

It was decided that Rumbold and Ayloffc should go with Argyle, and Ferguson and Fletcher of Saltoun with Monmouth; a tactful pledge of mutual comradeship which meant that Argyle had with him two experienced men at least. Though Macullum Mor was officially in command, Rumbold would be his chief of staff. The Scots were so eager to be off that the English were left scrambling desperately to get ready in time. Not a week would the obstinate Argyle delay.

All things considered, it is remarkable how secret the details of the enterprise were kept. The whole world knew that something was afoot, but the English government could not discover any of

the important facts; a failure for which they blamed the Prince of Orange.

The money had been stretched to cover the bare necessities. Unfortunately the possibility that they might encounter British warships meant that they were forced to lay out the disproportionately large sum of £5,500 on a 32-gun merchantman, the *Helderenburgh*, for whose hire Monmouth was forced to pawn, as Wade says, 'all he had in this world, even his biggest George'. Wade himself was entrusted with the spending of £3,000 on arms for 1,500 foot, 1,500 cuirasses, four pieces of field artillery, 200 barrels of gunpowder, with some small quantity of grenade shells, matches and other necessities.

The whole port of Amsterdam must have known of these proceedings, but the magistrates turned a blind eye, and no one knew the expedition's destination. The ships were sailing under sealed orders.

On 30th April the Prince of Orange wrote to his wife's uncle, Lord Rochester, who was now the King's chief minister, assuring him that he knew nothing, that on the word of a man of honour he did not even know if Monmouth was in Holland. On 2nd May Argyle sailed.

It is said, on the authority of two honest men¹ that Monmouth saw William before he went, and in the circumstances it is not unlikely. The Prince of Orange must have known what was impending, and whatever his attitude towards the affair was, it could not have been one of abstract contemplation. Too much was at stake.

If such a meeting did take place, it would be set in the same secret political climate as had existed during the lifetime of Charles II. That is to say, the declared objective was Monmouth's return, a new Parliament elected on the old basis . . . what then? What was to be the price of William's friendly non-intervention?

The Proclamation was already written and the bulk despatched to England. If William had read it – and this was the sort of matter in which he usually managed to be well informed – the knowledge, like a small dry cough at the end of a passionate speech, would

¹ Fletcher of Saltoun and Ailesbury. Ailesbury said he had it from the page who was in the ante-chamber during the interview. Also it is possible that Lady Wentworth confirmed it, for, though Ailesbury does not say he saw her before her death, the supposition is that he did.

punctuate the free flow of cousinly thought. He would realise that the situation was more complex than the summing up supposedly given him by the Grand Pensionary Fagel; that either way he had nothing to lose by the attempt, for, if it was successful, it would be easy for him, as the next heir in right of his wife, to 'shove him [Monmouth] out of the saddle and if, on the contrary, the Duke was worsted, he got rid of a dangerous rival when all the latter's party would have recourse to him'.

How strong was Monmouth's party in England? How strong was his own? He would have weighed it in his mind, computing the power of men like Halifax against the unknown power of that undifferentiated throng, the English nation.

If it was now that William asked that solemn assurance that Monmouth would not declare himself King – an assurance which Monmouth could give because such a decision would rest with the English parliament – no instinct warned him that this demand was quite specious and unrelated to any expected course of events. It was a promise asked for the record; an I.O.U. which would provide the Prince with a moral justification for any future action he thought it expedient to take. From Monmouth's point of view, the situation was more simple because he was now going to risk his head, and what lay beyond that precipice of action would have the inevitability of fate. There comes a moment in a man's life when thought must have pause, and for Monmouth this was the place and the time. Perhaps he trusted his cousin for no better reason than that he could see no reason why he should not. They were both 'Protestants', both believed in liberty, both, surely, were on the same side.

Whatever the truth, whether they did or did not meet to exchange their views, some such thoughts as these must have been in the heads of both. Their relationship had always been an ambiguous one, and was to remain so till the end.

On 24th May the *Helderenburgh* sailed. The next day, Bentinck wrote to Lord Rochester disclosing that the impending descent was to be upon Scotland and the West of England. This was the first news the English government was to receive that the objective was the West. We do not know who gave Bentinck this information, but we may guess.

FOURTEEN

THE CAMPAIGN FOR ENGLAND

I

ON Thursday 11th June 1685, the gentlemen of the small town of Lyme in Dorset were assembled on the town's bowling green for their weekly meeting.

There was nothing unusual in this, for throughout the country bowls was a favourite summer pastime providing exercises of a moderate kind, combined with a social occasion. While the woods glided over the turf, or the dinner was eaten, the affairs of the county were discussed, news exchanged, marriages arranged and enmities enjoyed. The Lyme bowling green, like many along the coast, was levelled from the cliffs and commanded a fine view of the sea; the view today was a particular source of interest, for since dawn three ships, flying no discernible colours, had been anchored off the bay. One large merchantman, two small vessels, French or Dutch built . . . the Customs Officer had gone out to inspect them that morning, but had not yet returned.

In spite of the fine weather and a good dinner, the members of the bowling club kept gazing out to sea with growing uneasiness. At five o'clock the post arrived with the weekly news-letter. Someone opened it and read the shocking news that three vessels, laden with arms and with the Duke of Monmouth aboard, had left Holland for Scotland or England. The horrified eyes, now instantly returning to the sea, saw that the ships were beginning to move inshore.

One of the most interesting revelations of the state then existing in the country is the instantaneous decision of the gentry and the prosperous citizens to abandon the town. They did not decide either to wait and see what Monmouth – if it were Monmouth – would do, or to muster the population in a determined effort to repel the invader, but during the three hours that intervened before the landing was made, fell into the panic preparations of men called

upon to desert a burning house. Only one man, a Mr Samuel Dassell of the Customs House, seems to have half-believed that the town could be defended. He made some effort to secure the assistance of the master of a ship in the harbour which was well supplied with powder, but while he was actually down at the Cob, the landing craft were pulling out from the invading ships to touch the sand on the western side of the harbour. Dassell retreated hastily in the direction of the town, where revolutionary shouts of 'a Monmouth! a Monmouth!' were already ringing out above the clatter of hooves as the Mayor and Corporation made haste to fly.

It was over. The authority of King and Church was temporarily at an end, and no one knew it better than the Mayor, who had so often and so thoroughly been 'on' Anabaptists and Quakers. The gaol was bursting with Dissenters, the cottages full of men reaching at last with tremendous satisfaction for the concealed weapon. Everywhere the harmless day was collapsing in revolution, and the sweating form of the runaway magistrate was already on the way to Honiton, where he was to pen that cry to Whitehall which was the most painful of all: 'I humbly beseech Your Majesty to pardon this distracted relation, not doubting but they have plundered me.'

The coastline which yielded itself on that June afternoon to the men in the boats was not alien or dangerous. On the contrary it was peculiarly theirs; it was the West, it was home. Since day-break they had been gazing on those pale fluted bays, on the long curve of the Cob, which, like a cool arm, circled the sand-coloured sea.

The Cob was the boundary of civilisation, and the beach to the west was deserted. Purple clusters of marshmallows grew among the stones, and the cliffs hung sheer against the sky. Each man must have mentally rehearsed his actions a hundred times; on their knees for a brief prayer, then quickly, almost silently, into column, swords drawn, standard raised, the road to take already decided upon.

They did not – with what proved to be unnecessary prudence – take the direct road along the shore, but climbed inland along the steep road that led up the cliffs. In this way they would come upon the town from the rear.

Meanwhile the news that it was Monmouth at last was spreading like a heath fire. The speed with which the townspeople made the

decision which they well knew involved their whole lives, supports the idea that they had long been prepared and were awaiting the landing. The town militia were beating their drums in his honour, the blacksmith was breaking open the door of the Town Hall and everyone was streaming up the steep road to meet the conquering party on its way.

This road was narrow, walled here and there, with oaks and elms now in their first luxuriance. Tiers of leaves would have risen above the wild roses on the hedges, to splash their shadow on the throng of people pressing forward.

Between the flowering hedges came Monmouth, walking ahead of the colours, with his drawn sword in his hand. He wore a purple coat with the gold Garter Star above his heart. The meeting brought everything to a halt. People covered his hands in kisses, he embraced a woman who had been in his sister's service, and freshly down the years comes this vivid feeling of physical contact: of the necessity of touch to victory, to politics, to life. He could naturally begin a sentence to a stranger with, 'Brave young man . . .' or take another 'warmly by the hand'. His companions presumably shared in this embracing and rejoicing. The young men would have been excited, and even Ferguson may have stooped to exchange kiss for kiss. The ubiquitous Customs Officer, Dassell, got caught up in the throng, but no one bothered to ask him which side he was on, or had time to answer his earnest questions.

The party, now two or three hundred strong, finally debouched into the Market Place. The forts had been secured, the arms and stores were landed under the supervision of Wade. In a field, a little to the east of the town's centre, the green standard was set up and Monmouth and Ferguson began to enlist recruits. The first name they wrote down was William Cox.

Everything had happened in the last three or four hours of a summer day. The light was gilding the cliffs when their boats touched the shore and daylight was only now fading.

In the seclusion of gardens or shuttered houses, the families of the gentry were busy burying their valuables before slipping away, they hoped, unnoticed. Dissenters freed from the prison were reclaimed by their families, and the windows of the town's taverns were lighting up as the women set about to prepare feasts. Voices

would rise and fall, the ripples of intense excitement merged into the twilit swell of the sea.

When a great day fades, it is evening which brings significance, and the touch of power, in the shadow. In the market-place a Cromwellian figure stood, reading the last words of the Proclamation. It was Joseph Tyler, a Bristol man who 'was very learned and had some talents for poetry'. He spoke this evening not only to those who listened, but to the future which lay unrevealed beyond the clustering stars.

'Now,' he said in conclusion, 'let us play the men for our People, and for the cities of our God; and the Lord do that which seemeth good unto him.'

Before daybreak on 12th June – that is to say less than twelve hours after the landing – between one thousand and fifteen hundred men came in. Every hour more were on their way. This fact has been often noted but never satisfactorily explained; nor can it be, on the assumption that this was simply a bungled first attempt at the Glorious Revolution or that the issues were the supposed political ideas of a Russell or a Sidney.

The rallying of this large number of men in a few hours – a portent of what was to come – has, of course, never seemed strange to those who hold the view that the 'common people' are a sort of mob or herd, and subject to any hysterical appeal to passion. In this superficial argument it is easy to assign to Monmouth the role of the seventeenth-century equivalent of a popular film star making a personal appearance, or to drop the voice and speak in uncomprehending pity of religious fanaticism. But of course this view is fallacious and will not bear even the most cursory examination.

If we really consider the matter, and try, as far as imagination will enable us, to substantiate the picture, it immediately becomes clear that the rising could not have been one of unpremeditated enthusiasm. It was not spontaneous in this sense.

The villages surrounding Lyme, from which these men came, were not normally in close communication with each other. On the borders of Dorset and Devon there were striking differences among the populations, having historical and even ethnological origins; yet now, as the word came, these differences were laid aside. 'They were in bed,' says Wade, 'when they heard the news

but they immediately arose and came away.' This was an action that was deliberate, that could not have been taken in hot blood. For two years the justices had been enforcing all the rigorous penalties of the Clarendon Code: the majority of Dissenting ministers were in gaol, and when any congregation met, they risked penalties which could tear their lives in pieces. So from the beginning they must have suspected the kind of punishment that would be theirs if they failed. That they broke the habit of a lifetime and took this irrevocable decision – one that only the most courageous or most reckless would take if left in isolation – argues that they regarded themselves as part of a mass movement.

'The common sort of people if they durst would rise every minute,' wrote the Duke of Somerset in a letter to the Court, dated 16th June, which gives an instance of the local feeling. 'I have here stopped ten idle lusty fellows we suspected to be going into Lime that could give no account of themselves and one of them confessed that he believed the Duke of Monmouth an honest man and was sure that he was a friend of his . . . and upon this we have sent them all to jaile.' Significantly he adds, 'I find all the gentlemen very well inclined to doe the King service, and the militia in very good order for militia.' Which perhaps means that as militia goes they went – his certainly did, and very shortly too.

'Ten thousand men are ready,' says a voice from London, and again and again does this figure, more probably signifying a substantial force than an estimated number, crop up in the records. Evidently, in spite of the persecution, the underground organisation had not been broken in the West and the agents had done their work with thoroughness and success.

These men and, with insignificant exceptions, all who afterwards joined the Army, came from two classes; the small shopkeeping and yeoman class, and the wage-earning class – agricultural labourers, weavers, miners, quarrymen. This identity of interest was the fruit of a decade of social development and political organisation, and it must be looked upon not as a curious accident but as the logical conclusion of a process which had long been at work in this area of England. It is interesting to ask how these men named their cause to themselves. Certainly not explicitly *for* Monmouth, though as the leader he was part of the enterprise. Again, this can

be clearly seen from the contemporary evidence. Few of these people had ever seen him and there was now nothing in his appearance which enabled men, even when near him, to recognise him. 'Which is Monmouth?' voices ask, almost at his elbow. Indeed, 'the brave and lovely hero' had greatly changed since he had stirred the countryside during the Western tour. He was now in his thirty-sixth year—and the Stuarts aged quickly. The psychological upheavals of the last years had left their mark upon him, and if Monmouth was loved, it was for his reputation as the Protestant champion and for his record as a humane and able general, not for the personal magnetism which may or may not have existed. It is possible also that the alteration in his looks, the 'leanness' and loss of glow noticed by everyone at this time was due, not to depression of spirits, but to ill health. After he was captured he was in a state of physical collapse and could not throw off a 'heavy cold'.

The Protestant religion was a more potent influence; *Protestant* was a word whose power it would be superficial to deny. The utmost sincerity burned in the bosoms of those who used it and the grace of God was as real as a musket. However, in asking for a precise definition of the Protestant religion it can be seen that it was not primarily a mystical relationship with the Deity, concerning only the individual's soul, but a philosophy which bound together in social action certain classes of the nation and which was directed against other classes. In the opinion of Monmouth's army, Royalist squires, Anglican clergymen and other great men were not 'Protestants', and this opinion was heartily endorsed by these people themselves. 'All true Protestants must stick together' was instantly translated by the enemy into, 'a seditious confederacy of rebels'. No amount of Biblical phrasology could conceal the fact, nor was it meant to, that the Protestant kingdom was of this world. 'Now let us play the men for our People, and for the cities of our God; and the Lord do that which seemeth good unto him.' The cities were Taunton, Exeter, Bristol and London, and the Lord was the fate and the future waiting to be won.

II

The morning after the landing Monmouth, who at this stage was acting as absolute commander, took the decision that the enormous

numbers of men who were pouring into Lyme made it desirable to remain in the town a day or two and form the nucleus of an army before marching to the general rendezvous at Taunton. His forces now consisted of over one thousand men formed into the Green, the Blue and the White regiments, and about one hundred and fifty Horse under Fletcher, an experienced cavalry commander, with Lord Grey, the two young Hewlings and Major Manley as officers.

While these preparations were continuing, Monmouth must have been impatiently awaiting the return of Heywood Dare, who had been secretly landed from the *Helderenburgh* early on the morning of Monmouth's arrival, to carry the news to the great houses of the West.

In the massive Somerset figure of Dare, the man who had been largely responsible for organising the West and whom Monmouth had come to love and rely upon, we can still trace one of those personalities who are, in a true sense, vital to a cause: he was a genuine leader. The news Dare brought, when he returned at dawn on Saturday, was not altogether good. Prideaux and Strode, instead of being at their bases in the West, were in London, and already under precautionary arrest. Considerable assistance had been looked for from Prideaux, who was a rich and able man, and all that Dare had managed to get from Ford Abbey was a number of coach horses. At Whitelackington, Trenchard, the Speke son-in-law, had only escaped arrest by flight - which meant his days of usefulness were over. Still, old George Speke, whose heart was as steady as the trunks of the trees in his park, was sending one of his sons with a gift of £200 and forty horses.

Scraps of news from many sources, constantly increasing, must now have formed a picture which was not quite the one Monmouth had anticipated. He would have seen with his own eyes, and from all sides heard reports, that the people were more enthusiastic and resolute than ever he could have imagined. The popular response was completely satisfactory. At the same time he would have observed that the gentry of Lyme had fled in a body and that, for one reason or another, no considerable squire or man of quality had shown himself.

This would neither alarm nor depress men like Dare, Holmes, Wade or Ferguson. Their fierce parochial confidence had never

been corrupted by serving for a campaign under Turenne, whereas Monmouth was a professional general, who had learnt the conventional lessons; and he believed in the necessity of a good body of cavalry, of experienced horsemen well mounted. He must already have been thinking that this was going to be more difficult than he had imagined. Tom Thynne was dead; Barrington Court empty, Ford Abbey empty, Colyton shut to them, Trenchard fled. Where were the Horse coming from? Still, he dined that day with Dare, Grey and Fletcher, and no doubt it was a good dinner and they were confident, discussing the first military operation they were to undertake. This was a night raid on Bridport, an outpost of the Dorset militia, where it was hoped stores and arms would be captured. After they had dined, they went into the commodious stables of the 'George' to inspect some of the horses Dare had brought back from Ford Abbey.

Perhaps they had drunk too much for a hot afternoon, perhaps some latent antagonism had always existed between Dare and Fletcher, for a violent quarrel broke out between them over a horse. Dare claimed the animal 'by right' of finding, Fletcher claimed it through precedence as a cavalry commander. While Dare argued, Fletcher mounted the animal and as the other raised his fist, either to strike him or pull him from the saddle, Fletcher drew his pistol and shot him through the head. It had all happened in a few minutes.

Monmouth sent the Scotsman back to the *Helderenburgh* under guard – he could not hang a man who had come to run fortunes with him – but he was so shocked and grieved by the loss of Dare that he was unable to pull himself together. All the consequences of this blow were evil: not only was the Army deprived of the leadership of one and the military experience of the other, but from this day forward Monmouth was left emotionally at the mercy of Grey.

Judged by what he wrote and said himself, few personalities so successfully preserve an unpleasant flavour throughout the passage of three hundred years as does that of Ford, Lord Grey of Werk. The coldness and frivolity of the man who could say, in referring to those first hours at Lyme: 'I suppose few people will believe we were so weary of our lives as to come and throw them away with three score or a very few more men', must, one supposes, have been

plain to all. Yet the fact remains that it was not; that Grey really did possess some fascination or charm which made many people, in particular Monmouth, overlook his defects time after time. He had, of course, been Monmouth's companion long before the days of great causes, they had shared many of the same experiences and each had defied the conventions in a romantic love affair. The truly anarchistic nature is often a personally attractive one; the figure with the light eyes, the 'cold Calib' for ever poised on the edge of a precipice, prepared for the reckless leap, is one that holds the imagination. Grey would do anything: yet everything he did ended in the same thing – destruction. Though neither a coward nor a traitor, the contrast between that *panache* of daring and the evil fact of repeated failure was one that his contemporaries could not understand. So now, with Fletcher gone, Grey was given command of the cavalry, an appointment for which he seemed eminently suited; yet that night in the attack on Bridport he gave a warning indication of what his services were worth.

It was shortly after sunset when the party of Horse with Grey and Colonel Venner, followed by some Foot under the command of young Wade, set out on their first expedition. They reached Bridport without any trouble – two militia sentries guarding the bridge surrendered without firing a shot. Venner, who was in command, went in first, and finding the High Street deserted sent back word to Grey to follow. As the Horse came up, some militia officers who were in 'The Bull' fired a volley out of one of the windows. Venner was shot in the stomach and the Horse stampeded and fled back to Lyme as fast as they could. Monmouth, who was waiting with a reserve force, immediately set off to the rescue. However, Wade and his Foot kept their heads. He took cover opposite 'The Bull', waited, and finding that there was really no opposing force in existence, scoured the town, captured a number of muskets, a few prisoners and about thirty horses, and returned to meet Monmouth in something like triumph. For a novice Wade had done very well indeed.

That the Horse, raw as they were, should have bolted, was not surprising; yet their retreat had been so complete, and so unchecked by their commander that Monmouth asked, anxiously: 'What ought I to do with Grey?' To which Matthews bitterly

replied, 'There's not another General in Europe who would ask such a question.'

This thirteenth day of June had certainly not been uneventful. Darc had been killed, Fletcher disgraced and now Grey was given the benefit of the doubt. Of these three disasters the last was to have the gravest consequences.

Monmouth had delayed long enough in Lyme. He still had no news of the world beyond the West; he was ignorant of what was happening to Argyle or in Cheshire. The only positive fact he knew was that Parliament was sitting, and this meant the Government would be capable of taking action without delay. The Duke of Albemarle, with the Devon militia, was moving down from Exeter and the Duke of Somerset with the Somerset militia from Taunton, and although neither of these forces need be taken very seriously, it was wise to push for Taunton as quickly as possible.

Before dawn on the morning of Monday, the 14th, the army, now two thousand strong and, in the eyes of their enemies 'a rabble of rascally People', marched out of Lyme and ascended the cliffs that were the gateway to England. Their drums were beating, their hats stuck with green leaf cockades, and the sun rose as they reached the high ground.

They marched west across the heath land called Trinity Heights, where the heather remembered the tread of the Legions and the bracken scrolls fell steeply to disclose the Axe valley. This was the parapet of the West, disclosing down the somnolent blue basin of the river, powdered with its summer haze, all the rich land to be taken. It is said that it was from here that Monmouth, looking through his glass, saw simultaneously the uniforms of the Somerset militia clustered like broom blossom between the trees as they moved towards Axminster, and the green uniforms of Albemarle's Devonshire men converging from the west to form a junction.

The army raced towards Axminster, reaching it that afternoon. The houses were decked with carpets, the people thronged the streets to welcome them. The militia commanders, realising the danger from the popular infection, retreated, but their troops were deserting, and during that night nearly the whole of the Somerset-shires came over to Monmouth and took their place in his army as a new regiment. Albemarle was falling back with his four thousand

men, though at one moment he had been so close that Wade, in his advance post at Shoote Hill, had thoughts of attacking him, till expressly commanded not to do so by Monmouth. It was not his aim to fight 'till his men had been a little disciplined, but rather to make up into the country as fast as possible to meet his friends; not questioning but there would be some action in several parts of the kingdom on the news of his success'.

'Success' is the keyword of this passage and those historians who have criticised Monmouth for not possessing the genius to see that in 'desperate enterprises' the bold stroke is the one that wins, do so in the light of knowledge which he certainly did not then possess. Far from being 'a desperate enterprise', all the indications were that the strength of the popular movement was irresistible and would continue to carry all before it. To take Exeter, the depot of the militia arms would have counted for a good deal, but at this stage he had not discovered how profoundly Wildman had lied when he said that arms were well distributed.

Camping in fields, the army spent four nights on the march to Taunton, passing in triumphal progress through Chard and Ilminster. A commander of professional troops could have moved more quickly to his objective, but Monmouth had no body of dragoons to order enforced marches through indifferent villages. In a strict sense he was not a general in command of an army, but the leader of a political campaign, an organiser of a mass uprising, a recruiting officer, horse thief, and general scavenger. The popular, revolutionary character of its support determined not only the form the army took, but the pace at which it moved. Composed of peasants and workers engaged in local manufactures, officered by middle-class tradesmen with a sprinkling of gentry, the army was and would obviously remain, predominantly a foot army and one handicapped by lack of arms, transport, clothes, shoes, and provisions. For Monmouth, the organisation of the masses flocking to him, was a totally new experience. The lessons learnt upon the French military chessboard and practised in Scotland were to a great extent useless, since none of the pieces were the same. Perhaps the only valuable part of his career as a soldier was the care he had learned to give his men and the consideration he knew how to show them. He was quick to establish a good relationship with his troops

and again and again he was to show that sensitivity to the need and the hour, that fine taste, which must at least spring partly from instinct, and which is essential to the morale of an army.

Still, on that morning of the 18th June, when they marched into Taunton, all the brilliant colours of a victorious summer day would have concealed their shortcomings and poverty, their lack of arms, cavalry and artillery. At Taunton, writes a contemporary, 'he was received with such general exultation that one would have thought the People's Wits were flown away in the flights of their Joy. The Houses and Doors were adorned with green Boughs, Herbs and Flowers, and there was hardly a hat to be seen without a Green Bough, the Mark of Distinction used by the Duke's men'.

In an hour such as this, no one would observe that the figure of the Duke, in his purple, gold-starred coat, was unadorned by a single diamond, for the sun itself was a diadem behind his head. This was the Monmouth of 'swift unspoken pomps', for whom a man might cry, 'By God, I will fight for him as long as I live!' Rosemary and lavender was crushed beneath the feet of the raw cavalry and 'ordinary fellows' marching to the beat of drums, framed by those great standards of green and blue, moving between garlands of pansies, pinks, moss roses, shining lilies, must have seemed other than they were.

'The town is ours!' cried a common fellow to the Reverend Mr Axe and scarcely were the words off his lips before the boast was made good in a very festival of rebellion. The magistrates were recalcitrant but powerless, and no one was in a mood to humour their obstinacy. While Lord Grey waited outside the White Hart inn, his patience – possibly his frailest possession – 'quite worn out', two officers named Samuel Story and Zachary Wyatt called on the justices with the proclamation in one hand and their drawn swords in the other, and told them to come out and hear it read 'or they would run them through the guts'.

The shivering magistrates obeyed and Story addressed them briskly, but not unkindly.

'I know some of you and I think you are men of sense and therefore wonder you should blind your eyes and balk your own reason. James, Duke of York that vilest of Villains is a usurper, a murderer.. He poisoned his brother, he was guilty of the murder of the Earl

of Essex, the Lord Russell, Colonel Sidney, Sir Thomas Armstrong.' Furthermore, 'he was now introducing Popery, Tyranny and arbitrary government: witness poor Oates who was the saviour of the nation and has been the first sufferer.' And then like an echo down the years comes the repetition of that earnest advice always given by the left wing to those in the middle of the road – always given and never considered.

'You are for the Church of England. I am a dissenter from the Church. We dissenters shall be first brought to the stake, but depend upon it you will follow.'

However, not all those who could claim to be rich – or moderately prosperous – were on the enemy side and the pupils of the town's most select Academy for Young Ladies had been busy stitching silk colours – a task probably instigated with enthusiasm by their young schoolmistress, who bore the name of Blake and proved herself worthy of it. On Sunday morning, carrying a sword in one hand and a little Bible in the other, she led her pupils to present their colours to the Duke, making first a short and graceful speech, 'in answer to which, the Duke said with an air of great satisfaction I come now into the Field with a Design to defend the Truths contained in that Book, and to seal it with my Blood if there is occasion for it'.

There might well be occasion for it. Throbbing like a jewel in the sunset's glow, the great city which had shaken off her bands, and risen to represent the West, stood outlined with lawless fire against the other world. She had given the trumpet call and before the flowers were dead in the streets, it was answered by her enemies.

III

At four o'clock in the morning of Saturday 13th June (the day Dare was killed at Lyme) James II was called from his bed to hear the news that Monmouth had landed. A few hours later a Bill of Attainder passed through Commons and Lords (only Anglesea and Delamere opposing it) so that the man who marched out of Lyme on the Monday morning was already officially dead and would henceforth be referred to as James Scott, late Duke of Monmouth.

The gentlemen and peers then fortunately assembled in London,

seemed to have closed their ranks in an almost spontaneous movement of solidarity; only the Whigs, perhaps, moved a little faster than the Tories. In times of real danger instinct supplements the more orthodox channels of information, and every man of fine estate felt that ugly tremor of popular revolt whose reverberations could be distinctly experienced in London. The Citts and Bumpkins were for Monmouth and there was no time to lose.

King James had never had, in the whole course of his life – and was certainly never to have again – so many loyal servants as he possessed at this time. The Commons voted him £400,000 for the suppression of the rebels, his considerable body of troops had enthusiastic officers and every Anglican divine was prepared to struggle into jack boots and buckle on pistols in a fervour of martial devotion. But the most signal service of all – and one which even he could scarcely have expected – was to be paid him by his nephew the Prince of Orange. On receiving his uncle's urgent request for the return of the Scottish and English regiments in the Dutch service, William did not procrastinate or make excuses – as he could well have done, the States not wishing to grant the request – but despatched them with their artillery and equipment so promptly that they arrived at Gravesend on the 21st June.

The Prince was a man of unyielding purpose. He was a professional with his back to England and his gaze fixed on France. True, his tactics had a certain versatility to which a non-Calvinist moralist might fix unpleasant names, but he had learnt those tactics during years when the penalty of failure was destruction. He did not care for England or the English, he simply wanted to use them, and his position in relation to them, for 'the common cause'. At the present juncture his position and interest were clearly defined, and his actions gave the cue to his friends in England. Those lords, such as Halifax and Sunderland, who had once, perhaps, prudently encouraged Gaffer Scott – though never his vagabonds – now retired to their closets, bore themselves like philosophers and left no record of their meditations. Perhaps the fanciful may catch an oblique glimpse of this time in a reflective sentence from Lord Halifax. 'The knaves in every government are a kind of corporation and though they fall out one with the other like beasts of prey, yet upon occasion they unite to support the common cause.'

And it might be supposed that he, if any man, had sufficient experience to diagnose this 'common cause'.

In the City, where only three years ago Shaftesbury had predicted that ten thousand men would rise 'to save England', silence reigned. A silence so profound that it wrapped both gaolers and captives, Royalists and rebels. It is as if no native Englishman could bear to speak of a situation which, some few days later, was described with a certain shrewd detachment by the French Ambassador, Barillon, in a despatch to his master.

More than two hundred suspected persons have been arrested there [in the City], among whom are many rich merchants and other rich persons of note. This causes a great change in people's minds, and much interruption to commerce. The people secretly favour Monmouth, and that would openly appear, should an occasion present itself which would allow them to declare without great danger. The King of England is well aware of this, and is determined not to leave London upon any consideration. It is certain that if any movement is made in any part of England, Monmouth's affair will become more difficult, because it will be necessary to separate the King of England's troops, for they can place no dependence upon the militia, who are more disposed to Monmouth than the King's party.

The people secretly favour Monmouth; and that would openly appear should an occasion present itself. All the ruin of an organisation successfully broken by its enemies, all the hopelessness of a party in decline, is captured in this phrase. To wait on occasions is to accept defeat.

In those small, crowded houses, in all the back rooms where the printers, the dissenters, the former political organisers still managed to live, an agonised hope must have pulsed through the summer days. That the resolute and the enterprising chose to slip out of London and speed away to the West rather than remain to raise the City indicates clearly how hopeless the chances of a rising now seemed. For better or worse, the power to win was centred in the West. Agents met in taverns, discussing what to do in whispers. The faithful and unfortunate Disney was caught in bed with his mistress, the Proclamation half printed in the room below. His

captors allowed him to put on his breeches – perhaps the last act of common humanity showed him in this world. A few days later he was hanged, drawn and quartered, while his careful brother-in-law, Major Wildman, prepared to pack and fly.

People must have stared at the cobbles across which the ashes of so many famous bonfires had once blown, and thought: if College were alive, if Shaftesbury were still in Thanet House. . . .

They would have heard that Churchill had been despatched westwards with a strong body of regular troops, that Colonel Kirke was following him, with the Tangier regiment. After a brief spasm of elation at the departure of the King's troops, they would have seen the reinforcements landing from Holland and watched, with sinking hearts, the unloading of artillery and equipment. There was no doubt that the government could deploy a more formidable number of seasoned troops than had hitherto been possessed by any English king in time of peace.

I V

A council of war was held in Taunton. It was the first Monmouth had summoned since he landed and the men who attended it – Grey, Wade, Ferguson, Colonels Ffoulkes, Holmes, Matthews, Venner, Richard Goodenough and the Dutch artillery officer, Buyse – were called upon to make two major decisions, the first military, the second political.

On the night of the 18th they had received the surprising news that Churchill, with eight troops of dragoons, was at Axminster, having left London on the 15th. Moving with that surprising speed which was afterwards to become so famous on the battlefields of Europe, he had arrived at Bridport on the 17th. From there, on receiving information from Albemarle, he turned north and was now at Axminster, allowing his exhausted horses a short rest. Colonel Kirke, following him with the Tangier regiment, was believed to be somewhere near Dorchester.

The council must have agreed unanimously on the necessity of leaving Taunton immediately, because it was impossible for them to fight Churchill. Raw foot, poorly armed, would not stand a chance if exposed to experienced cavalry. And none knew the quality of these guards better than Monmouth. He was also aware

that both Churchill and Kirke were able soldiers, they had followed him across the half moon at Maastricht and Churchill had owed his first promotion to Monmouth's commendation.

Monmouth's broad plan was to march into Gloucester and Cheshire, join forces with his friends there, and then turn towards London. The problem arose whether to strike immediately for Bristol and risk the enemy with his superior mobility reaching it first, or to adopt the more cautious plan of first entering Bridgwater – a town half encircled by river and marshland and rich in cattle and foodstuffs – which could be made into a general headquarters for the push northwards. It was the disturbingly sudden arrival of Churchill on the scene which, more than any other factor, prevented them from making a direct attempt on Exeter and Bristol. Had Churchill delayed two days, Monmouth would probably have taken Bristol. As it was, he decided on the Bridgwater plan as the safer.

Evidently their lack of cavalry, and the fact that the government had dared to send most of their troops from London, had a depressing effect on the Council. During the days at Lyme they had, without exaggerated optimism, foreseen a swift, nearly bloodless revolution and the collapse of a corrupt government before a resurgent people. They had counted on risings in Scotland, Cheshire and London. Now they were faced with the unpleasant fact that they had been in England eight days and there was no news of any other military action.

The failure of the Whig gentry to come in, the non-appearance of those well-mounted squires who had been expected to form so many troops of Horse, was a subject of the most serious concern to the commanders, though their importance apparently escaped the rank and file. 'We wonder the gentlemen come not in,' they were reported as saying. 'Well, we will do the work without them, and then we will have their estates too.' But this reasoning did not seem good to most of their officers, who doubted if the work could be done at all without cavalry.

It was for this reason that they decided to make a last bid to win back the support of the Whig gentry, by declaring Monmouth King. It was not a unanimous decision and accounts conflict as to who pressed for it. Probably Wade, Holmes, Matthews and

Monmouth himself originally opposed it, though they were won over after argument. That this contingency had always been foreseen is clear in Monmouth's earlier interview with the Scots, when he said he would not declare himself King unless advised to do so by his followers. The advice was now given and he was forced, perhaps reluctantly, to agree. It was hoped that his assumption of sovereignty would allay the general alarm caused by the popular character of his army and give a certain air of lawful respectability to the military proceedings.

Among the army it does not seem to have been an unpopular decision. Tyler, whose voice and delivery were evidently admired, was cheered as he proclaimed him.

We, therefore, the noblemen, gentlemen and Commons at present assembled, in the names of ourselves and of all the loyal and Protestant noblemen, gentlemen and Commons of England, in pursuance of our duty and allegiance, and for the delivering of the Kingdom from Popery, tyranny and oppression, do recognize, publish and proclaim the said high and mighty Prince James, Duke of Monmouth, our lawful and rightful sovereign and King, by the name of James II by the Grace of God, King of England, Scotland, France and Ireland, Defender of the Faith. God save the King!

To the opposers there was possibly comfort in the reflection that 'We' represented one peer, scarcely more than a dozen gentlemen and at least seven thousand Commons. The hats tossed in the air, the huzzas ringing through Taunton, were for 'King Monmouth', a sovereign whose title was as popular as it was unique.

On the day Monmouth was proclaimed, substantial reinforcements reached them like some happy augury. Colonel Basset, an old Ironside, had slipped out of London bringing with him, in a remarkable piece of enterprise and organisation, a whole regiment stolen from the Royal forces, mostly Taunton men. He was followed by Perrot, a London silk dyer or brewer, an old Fifth Monarchy man, also with a sizeable armed force, and a Hampshire gentleman, Colonel Dore, joined them with a well-mounted body of a hundred horse; an honourable exception to the black record of the Whig squires.

On the 19th, Churchill had moved up to Chard and on the morning of Sunday the 21st, Monmouth led his army out of Taunton on the twelve miles' march to Bridgwater. They were now about seven thousand strong and presented almost the appearance of a professional army. Grey commanded a thousand Horse, of varying quality, and the Foot were formed into five regiments: the Red, the White, the Blue, the Yellow, and the Green, commanded respectively by Wade, Ffoulkes, Basset, Matthews and Holmes.

A mood of great optimism prevailed; the consciousness of their achievement, the fact that ordinary Englishmen leaving their mines, fields, quarries, shops and looms could transform themselves into such a formidable army to serve their own purposes, was in itself exhilarating. The brilliance of the occasion would be intensified by the midsummer weather, by the deluge of sunlight on the basking crops and flowering hedges, and that tremendous consciousness of power and superiority which rose from the very soil of the West. It was on this morning's march that Ferguson cast off a lifetime's anonymity and cried out at the top of his voice in a fanfare of self-expression: 'I am Ferguson! — that famous Ferguson for whose head so many hundred pounds were offered! I am that man!'

Bridgwater, as became the town which had given birth to Blake, welcomed them with the unqualified love of a mother. The mayor and magistrates as well as the people came out to meet them; and here, at least, the New Country Party unity did not have to be revived at the sword's point. Provisions were plentiful and the army found good food and quarters. Monmouth lodged in the half-ruined castle where once, so many years ago, his father had lived under the care of the Wyndhams.

It was during these days that some craftsman, improvising from common experience, created a home-made weapon from a scythe blade fitted to a pole. Over a thousand of the new recruits had these weapons, and Monmouth ordered them to be divided into companies of about two hundred men and attached to each regiment to supply the place of the grenadiers they lacked.

On the night of the 21st they received further news of enemy forces. Churchill was now about twelve miles distant at Langport, a town which formed the eastern corner of a triangle with Taunton

at the western angle and Bridgwater at its apex. Lord Feversham, who was being sent to supersede Churchill as supreme commander of the King's forces in the West, was approaching Chippenham with a force of Horse Guards and was closely followed by the Duke of Grafton with Foot Guards.

If Monmouth struck direct north to Bristol through Axbridge – the shortest route – he not only had all the enemy forces on his eastern flank, with only a narrow strip of land between himself and the sea, but risked being beaten to his goal by Feversham, who already lay nearer to Bristol and was on the right side of the river. If he did this he might well be hemmed in and forced to fight at a disadvantage. An alternative was to abandon the Bristol-Gloucester push, march west through Glastonbury and Wells, manoeuvre Feversham into defending Bath and then slip past him and march on London. This was a bold and feasible plan, if the capital was empty of troops, as he believed it must be. No one knew that the Dutch regiments were home.

It is difficult to believe that either of these plans could have succeeded or led to anything but immediate disaster, and the compromise he did adopt, had at least the advantage of gaining time. He decided to take the Glastonbury-Wells route, and defer a final decision till he reached Shepton Mallet, and could see how their chances looked.

Whether they knew it or not – and it is very likely that Monmouth did know it – two events only could now bring victory to the army which marched out of Bridgwater: either popular revolts in London and elsewhere, considerable enough to necessitate the recall of the Royal troops, or a decisive military victory over the royalist forces, which might bring these revolts into being. These were the essentials of victory, and no bold, brilliant advance – such, for instance, as Monmouth's great nephew, Charles Edward Stuart, made with his Highlanders in '45 – could possibly have brought success, spectacular though it might look in romantic legend. The enemy forces must be substantially destroyed or the Government collapse beneath popular pressure: these are the only circumstances in which any rebellion has been known to succeed.

The weather broke on the morning they left Bridgwater. The long hot days gave way to a deluge of rain and the summer was

extinguished by one of those sudden drops in temperature which are so common in England. For the majority of the army, who had nothing but homespun shirts and only rough shoes, this was the first experience of real hardship. They marched east across the smooth billows of moor, which even on the brightest day had an air of loneliness and inhumanity, as if the cattle, the farmsteads, the willow tufts, were borne on sufferance only and might at any moment disappear. They camped that night between Glastonbury and Wells, and Monmouth went round the camp encouraging and speaking to the men. Their spirits were good and they were eager to make the push to London.

The next day they reached Shepton Mallet. It was now thirty-six hours since they had left Bridgwater, and there was still no news from London, Cheshire or Scotland. In its absence, Monmouth dared not make the push for London and he decided to turn, and make a bid for Bristol.

Probably no one who made it ever forgot that thirty mile march on Midsummer Day, the longest day of the year and the coldest, heaviest, downpour of rain. Through sombre gorges wooded with elms, over cliffs deep in bracken, they hauled their transport and their precious cannon. When they emerged at last on to the moor, local miners were their guides, and they followed them blindly in the tempest of rain.

By nightfall they reached Pensford, a village about six miles south of Bristol. There disappointment was waiting for them: Feversham had reached Bristol the day before, destroyed the bridge across the Avon at Keynsham, and had now retired on Bath. One slight chance remained: working all night, they repaired the bridge with the object of slipping across in the early hours and taking Bristol beneath Feversham's nose, for they knew the citizens would be waiting for them and that Beaufort's militia were not to be trusted. But in the watery dawn the soaked and sleepless men saw that it was useless. Feversham had guessed their plan and drawn up troops and artillery on the flat land beneath the city's walls.

The King's forces were also beginning to feel the strain of these tedious marches. The Duke of Albemarle was at Wellington, the Duke of Somerset at Bath with Feversham, the Duke of Beaufort at Bristol. Churchill on the march, was quartering at Wells. Thus

surrounded lies the Rebels', noted an artillery officer in his diary. But his confidence was unjustified, as the 'Rebells' slipped back across the river to Keynsham, leaving Churchill to occupy Pensford, where, perhaps in a certain irritation, he hanged a felt maker called Jarvice, 'a notorious fellow', who 'dies obstinately and impenitently'.

Some of Oglethorpe's dragoons came charging through the straggling town and it was while questioning prisoners taken after this incident that Monmouth learned the shattering news of the return of the Dutch regiments. The Scotch battalions which he had commanded at Bothwell Brig were on their way to join Feversham, the great artillery train of thirty field pieces was lumbering west, and the English regiments were encamped outside London. The knowledge that he had been justified in his decision against making a push for the capital, could not have done much to mitigate the terrible situation in which they now found themselves.

He might make a bold effort to break through into Gloucester, but his men were exhausted, many were barefoot and the weather was unabated. In forty-eight hours or so Feversham would have such a concentration of troops under his command that he would be able to drop his hesitant tactics and attack in earnest. He would endeavour to hem Monmouth's forces in and compel them to fight, and everything would be to his advantage. His superiority in artillery and mounted troops meant that not only his strength, but his mobility, would be much greater than theirs.

Under cover of darkness Monmouth slipped away south-east to Phillips Norton, where, on the morning of the 27th, Feversham sent a considerable force to attack them. A laconic entry in the diary of Edward Dummer, an artillery officer in the Royalist army, records this enterprise for posterity.

Five hundred foot with some troops of Horse Grenadeers and Dragoons were detached under the command of the Duke of Grafton to fall upon the rear which was accordingly done but with ill success: the rebels having posted themselves so advantageously that we lost about 50 men, besides wounded, the Duke himself narrowly escaping. Soon after the Body of the army with

the artillery came up, and having stood two hours a fair mark shooting at hedges and shot at, in desperate rainy weather, we marched off to Bradford.

In fact, this engagement – the most considerable which had yet taken place – was a complete fiasco for the Royalists and must have done something to revive the spirits of the army.

*The Duke of Monmouth is at Norton Town
All a-fighting for the Crown,
Ho, boys-ho!*

The fight was hot while it lasted and there are graves in the market-place. It was at Norton that Colonel Holmes's son was killed.

With the enemy beaten off, they slipped away once more, up to their knees in dirt, and moved south-east to Frome. Frome marked the nadir of their misfortune. Never before or afterwards were they to be so depressed as they were here, for news was waiting for them from Scotland.

They heard how Argyle had landed, how the Covenanters had failed to rise and how not only Argyle, but both Rumbold and Ayloffs had been captured. The whole enterprise had been stamped out with scarcely a trace. Scotland had not risen, London had not risen, and even a troop of Wiltshire Horse promised by a Mr Adlam had failed to materialise. Playing hide and seek through lanes and hedges, laying a crafty ambush and avoiding the enemy, were only temporary palliatives: what was to be done? The Council even discussed abandoning the whole project. Monmouth declared in extreme bitterness that nobody stirred anywhere to make a diversion – nobody did anything to take the weight off their backs: and that those who came from Holland – some eighty in all – might do worse than return there before it was too late. Possibly this was no more than a verbal expression of his misery, for the Council agreed – and in this instance, Grey seems to have spoken with spirit – that flight was out of the question. They had landed in the country with an object in view, a purpose for which they had publicly declared they would lay down their lives. Seven thousand men had joined them, and in that action risked their families, their property, their towns and villages. No compromise or retreat was possible,

for if the cause was abandoned, it and they were finished for ever.

Monmouth, who had not concealed his depression from his officers, now showed a reviving confidence. He despatched a messenger to London with desperate commands to create a diversion at any cost, he expressed doubts as to the loyalty of the regiments withdrawn from Holland, ordered Colonel Venner with one or two others, to go to Amsterdam, taking £200 – perhaps all they had to give – and endeavour to raise some more arms, while he prepared to fall back on Bridgwater. This base he believed could be held, while he sent his Horse and his best Foot in a last attempt to reach Gloucester and Cheshire.

It has been stressed by various writers that desertions on a considerable scale took place at this time: but if we are to judge by the comments of the other side, they must be set in their proper context, as the desertion of men for whom there were no arms, and not seen as a symptom of popular disillusionment. Whatever else Monmouth lacked, it was not men.

On the 4th July the army re-entered Bridgwater, Monmouth riding at the head of the Scythic men. The town was in an intense state of activity; all the preparations to withstand a siege going forward: men digging, carts loaded with provisions lumbering through the streets, officers in red coats and jack boots scraping their swords past people's legs. The stage was set for what was to be the last battle of the English civil war.

FIFTEEN

SEDGEMOOR

IT is probable that no accurate account exists of any battle ever fought; for no one individual is in a position to see or know everything, and of what took place on Sedgemoor in the early hours of 6th July there are six principal accounts—all in some respects contradictory. First there are the stories of those who took part in the actual fighting: Nathaniel Wade on Monmouth's side, and a supposed account by Ferguson—which certainly has a characteristic style—quoted in Eachard's history, though there is no trace of the original document. On the Royalist side, there is the journal of the artillery officer, Edward Dummer, and the account written by King James, presumably on first-hand information from his officers. There are also two narratives at second-hand; that of the Vicar of Chedzoy, Andrew Paschall, a man who no doubt did his best to discover from others what took place (though he was very prejudiced against Monmouth) but who saw nothing with his own eyes; and the vivid story told by the historian Oldmixon, then a boy of twelve living in Bridgwater, who saw something of the beginning and end of the battle, but whose accuracy, owing to his youth and passionate partisanship of Monmouth cannot be entirely relied upon.

On the 5th July the Royalist army was encamped at the side of the village of Weston Zopland, five miles from Bridgwater, facing northward across the open moor to the village of Chedzoy, with the Polden Hills beyond it. This moorland was intersected by various drains or ditches and one of these, Bussex Rhine, lay between the Royalist troops and the moor; it is described by Edward Dummer as 'a dry but in some places miry ditch'. It was not very wide and had two fords or plungeons, one at its upper and the other at its lower end.

Apparently, a Monmouthite inhabitant of Chedzoy called Mr

Sparke mounted the church tower on Sunday morning – this citadel of the Anglican faith having been prudently deserted by the Reverend Paschall – and, seeing the disposition of the Royal forces, sent a local countryman to reconnoitre the camp at closer range, and then sent him on to Bridgwater to suggest to Monmouth the feasibility of a surprise attack. This peasant was an illegitimate child known, to the confusion of posterity, by two names – Richard Godfrey or Benjamin Newton. He was evidently one of those whom the Vicar of Chedzoy described as ‘some of our meanest people’, who had recently met together and ‘talked insolently’. He was an ardent supporter of the cause and loved Monmouth ‘as well as it were possible to love a man’.

Godfrey, after his inspection, hurried away to Bridgwater, found Monmouth and told him of Mr Sparke’s idea. Monmouth was impressed, the council was called and they evidently discussed the plan with rising excitement. Monmouth then, says Wade, ‘sent back the spy that brought him the account to see if they entrenched or not who brought him answer that they did not but tooke no notice of the ditch that lay in the way of our march’. Godfrey knew the whole countryside as well as he knew his hand, but it is likely that he did not understand what they meant by ‘entrench’ – a word which to him might quite possibly have signified the act of digging, of creating artificial barricades or redoubts, such as, for instance, the men were at this moment making round Bridgwater. Probably, knowing them so well, he did not consider the rhines as barriers. He was going to lead the army on its march in the darkness and he knew the fordable places and was no doubt confident in his knowledge.

Monmouth, on receiving the information that they did not entrench, mounted the tower of St Michael’s church and inspected the country through his glass. The sun was shining after all those days of rain and the whole area was revealed in the clear atmosphere. He saw the circling fringe of cornfields, the willow-bordered roads and lanes, the tall, peach-pink towers of Chedzoy and Weston churches rising from their villages and the cattle spread like toys across the silvery-green wash of moor.

The whole of the royal forces which had been converging on him for so many weeks were now assembled at the camp at Weston.

He had evaded and cheated them, fled from them or harried them, and now there they were at last, relentlessly united to compose an army. Across those five miles he could see them and the sight must have roused in him some curious sensations. All he had been lay there; all his youth as Duke of Monmouth and Captain-General of the King's forces. All he now was, was centred in this church and the street beneath: King Monmouth, whose royalty was a popular cause, whose army were peasants and revolutionaries, whose colours were the Leveller green. Few men who have changed sides could ever have seen the gulf between their present and their past lying so plainly before them.

On the Royalist right, were six regiments of Foot. First, the Scotch or Dumbarton's Regiment, commanded by Lieutenant-Colonel Douglas. This Regiment was considered the flower of the King's army. 'I know these men. They will fight,' said Monmouth with an irrepressible pride. 'If I had them with me I should not doubt of success.' Next to Dumbarton's were two battalions of the 1st Regiment of Guards, commanded by the Duke of Grafton and Major Eaton. Then a battalion of the 2nd Regiment of Guards, commanded by Colonel Sackville. Then Trclawney's Regiment commanded by Churchill, then the Queen Dowager's Regiment under Kirke. About a fifth part of each of these Regiments was composed of grenadiers and the total numbers were approximately four thousand. In contrast to the Foot, who were all encamped at close and precise quarters, the Horse—numbering about seven hundred—were scattered. Lord Cornbury's three troops of Dragoons were some three miles to the rear at Langport: Major Oglethorpe and his troopers were out on reconnaissance in the direction of the Bristol road. Only Sir Francis Compton and his seven troops of the King's Regiment of Horse were at hand. The train of artillery, consisting of sixteen pieces (there were some other field guns disposed among the Foot) was five hundred paces distant from the camp on the Bridgwater road. There were also reserves of militia well in the rear at Middlezoy and Othery. It was probably considered that these could not be trusted to take part in any action except as a last resort.

After his examination of the royalist camp, Monmouth seems instantly to have decided on his plan. If he had been depressed and

exhausted by the campaign, he now showed no sign of it but made his preparations for a night attack with speed and efficiency. Probably they were all relieved and elated at the prospect of a battle.

The plan of attack was to march out of Bridgwater by the Eastern Causeway and, making a detour through lanes, come upon the open moor to the north of Chedzoy and advance across it to the camp of the Royalists – who, if they expected an attack, would look for it along the direct Bridgwater road. The Horse would go in, set fire to the tents, create confusion, and the work would be finished by the Foot.

As this plan was explained in outline – though not in detail – to his officers, Colonel Matthews suggested dividing the command of the Horse, since so much depended upon them. Monmouth, who seems to have been conscious that this was a criticism of Grey, again defended him. Lord Grey's part, he said, was simple enough, and he thought he could trust him to do it. This was the last time in his life he was called upon to trust Grey.

That evening at seven o'clock, after all the preparations had been made, Ferguson preached to the army in Castle field. In the course of his long career he had preached many famous sermons, written many brilliant arguments, and perhaps the most peculiar of all his talents was his power to arrest the attention by unexpectedly plunging the whole of his mind, keen as the blade of a sharp knife, into the mind of listener or reader. From the dulllest or the most critical he had always drawn that pang of response and tonight he cannot have failed. He chose a text from the twenty-second chapter of *Joshua*: 'The Lord God of gods, the Lord God of gods, he knoweth, and Israel he shall know, if it be in rebellion, or if in transgression against the Lord (save us not this day).' While he made his final affirmation of the cause he had followed so enthusiastically, 'though the way has been full of dirt and blood', the sun was setting, so that the houses, the shadows, the tall figure of the preacher would be transfigured by memories. Perhaps some thought – and long ago it must have seemed – of that first sunset in Lyme, or caught between the phrases glimpses of the past from which they were separated by stupendous actions. Concentrated in the present, they had nothing now to do with any action save

one: this coming fight. The various means, the changing tactics, the blundering course of so many historic years, had narrowed to this need, this moment, this diamond point: tonight they must win.

In the Royalist camp the men drank the local cider – probably not more immoderately than usual – Lord Feversham made do, in a cottage bedroom, and no one bothered with the tales of spies that Monmouth intended an attack. They were tired after so much tedious marching, bored with the whole affair, their confidence in their safety springing not so much from the conviction that Monmouth intended to break away down the Keynsham road in a last bolt for Hereford and Gloucester, as from that fundamental contempt of the professional for the amateur, of the gentleman for the peasant. Dummer described it as ‘a preposterous confidence of ourselves with an undervaluing of the rebels’. In Dumbarton’s Regiment only a Captain Mackintosh, who possibly knew his old commander, wagered that ‘Monmouth would come’.

The army in Bridgwater was due to assemble at eleven o’clock that night and it may be imagined that the preparations were intense. Each regiment had its detachment of scythe men whose silver blades were no doubt as sharp as razors: the wagons were piled with ammunition, the three field-pieces fitted smoothly into their carriages under the careful supervision of Buyse. This was an age when commanders in the field dressed for battle with the meticulous care of a surgeon preparing for the operating theatre. All the officers would be appropriately dressed and Monmouth in his black plumed beaver, his armour gleaming over the purple coat, cloaked, gauntletted, with silver buttons and crystal buckles picking up the facets of light, would appear as splendid a general as any who campaigned with Luxembourg or loomed on a painter’s canvas before a background of inconsequent carnage.

‘About 11 o’clock that night,’ said Wade, ‘we marched out of the town. I had the vanguard of foot with the Duke’s regiment¹ and we marched in great silence along the road that leads from Bridgwater to Bristol.’

But the description of silence is qualified by the twelve-year-old Oldmixon who says he saw Monmouth ride out attended by his

¹ As the Duke’s regiment was the Blue, it would seem that Wade had had his command changed. He had previously been Colonel of the Red.

Life Guard of Horse and 'ran down with the stream and was one of its [the Army's] well wishers'. Perhaps they were throngs of whispering people, feet that ran softly, voices murmuring good fortune. . . . The moon was risen over their housetops and shining on the faces of the men who marched out.

They continued in silence down the Eastern Causeway and into Bradney Lane till, says Wade, 'We came to the lane that passed into the moor where the King's army was.' This was the narrow and gloomy Marsh Lane where the willow clumps were thick. 'Then we made our halt for the Horse to pass by and received our orders [as Wade was a member of the council, this seems to imply that the actual plan was Monmouth's alone and that it was only now imparted to the officers] which was that the Horse should advance first and push into the King's camp and mixing with the King's foot endeavour to keep them from coming together. That the cannon should follow the horse and the foot the cannon and draw all up in one line and so finish what the horse had begun before the King's horse or cannon could get into order.'

It is interesting to note that Wade says nothing about the more elaborate orders, presumed by some writers to have been given to Grey, about crossing the upper plungeon of Bussex and falling on the Royalist camp from the rear. As he gives them, the orders are simple and contain no reference to Bussex.

With the Horse ahead they advanced southward from a farm called Peasy and skirting Chedzoy, crossed Black Ditch, and then, forming into two columns, Foot on the right and a squadron of Horse on the left, they came to Langmoor Rhine. It was now between one and two in the morning, the sky had clouded and a good deal of mist from the recent rains was increasing the darkness. They would all be feeling the strain of that two hours of silent marching.

Ferguson, who had deserted his usual place at Monmouth's side to go with the Horse, now takes up the story which he tells incidentally, as an illustration of the incompetence of Grey.

'The first thing he [Grey] did after we were drawn up and in view of the enemy's fires [he probably means on the open moor] was his dismissing of the guide [Godfrey] who was to have directed him in the ground where we were to march; and to have

shown him where with no inconveniency we might have fallen upon the enemy's infantry. By which means some of our troops, by reason of the darkness of the morning and their ignorance of the ground, came to be embogged in a morass, which occasioned delay as well as confusion.' It is clear from what follows that this was Langmoor Rhine. After some difficulty and delay they found the plungeon and crossed, and it was while doing this that, according to James II's account, they were discovered by sentries of Compton. 'As they were passing the last defile before the camp (now about one mile distant) the advanced sentries of the Horse Guard discovered them and galloped back to advise Sir Francis Compton of it, who immediately gave the alarm.'

This explanation of their discovery is more probable than that they were deliberately betrayed by Captain Hucker or another firing a musket—though naturally in the darkness it would be difficult to know precisely what happened. James II is supported in this by Ferguson, who goes on to say: 'The two troops that were commanded to advance first, and to fall into the enemy's lines found themselves after they had received their fire [presumably from the sentries] and thought there remained no more but to boldly attack them [evidently the Horse now went as hard as they could on the heels of Compton's sentries, both arriving almost simultaneously] fronted and hindered both by a ditch and another morass.'

This was the fatal Bussex Rhine. 'A ditch,' says James II, 'which served for a drain to the moor and though it was then a dry season, was not to be passed by horse but in one or two places and 'twas this drain deceived the Duke of Monmouth, for he, not knowing of it, thought the foot lay open and consequently the whole quarter.'

Although local men in the army would know of the ditch, it seems plain that neither Monmouth nor Grey, nor the other officers, knew of it, and as the precise orders had not been disclosed till they were on the moor, it is not surprising that in the intense excitement and preoccupation of the moment no one thought—or succeeded—in warning them of it. It is noticeable that Wade, Ferguson and James II all speak as if the Horse, after crossing Langmoor, intended to go *straight* into the camp, not expecting

any obstacle. True, James II speaks of 'taking them by the flank', but from the Royalist point of view – from which he was writing – their flank *was* the Bussex Rhine. The main body of the camp faced in the Bridgwater direction with the road on its other flank.

It is only the Reverend Paschall, writing upon hearsay, who says: '*It is likely upon a presumption*¹ that the Horse going over the Plungeon and so into Weston would have given the alarm behind the King's camp.'

Grey then, and the Horse, not believing anything lost, comes up fast, with Monmouth on his heels who, appreciating that they are discovered and time is now of crucial importance, does not wait to form an order of *bataille* but marches in file as quickly as he can. Grey comes upon Bussex, which he sees in a flash cannot be jumped by ill-trained horses in the dark, and in desperation does the only thing he can: wheels to his left and races along the edge looking for a crossing. Being challenged from the other side as to who they were, someone (with presence of mind) shouted back 'Albemarle!' which gained them a respite till they found the plungeon guarded by Compton. Now they must attempt to cross.

'Who are you for?'

'The King!'

'What King?'

'Monmouth and God be with us!'

'Take this then!' cried Captain Berkeley and ordered his company of musketeers to fire. This volley was followed by fire from the two regiments of Guards. The explosions and the light proved fatal and 'the rebell horse ran away leaving some of their men and horses on the ground'.

According to the acute and acrimonious eye of Ferguson, 'these two Troops (who attempted the crossing) whose officers though they had no great skill yet had courage enough to have done something honourably (in particular Captain Jones who fought like a hero) had they not for want of a guide met with the aforesaid obstruction [Bussex] there was no one of all the rest of our troops [of Horse] that ever advanced to charge, or appeared so near the enemy as to give or receive a word'. The officers, he says, were 'useless and unservicable in it, as never once attempting to charge,

¹ My italics.

not so much as keeping their Men in a Body and Figure to make a Shew. And I dare affirm, that if our Horse had never fired a pistol but only stood in a posture to have given jealousy and apprehension to the enemy our Foot alone would have carried the day'.

The initial operation had failed. The Horse scattered, the Royalists were rapidly taking up their battle positions, all the action would now fall upon the Foot. It was at this moment that Monmouth seeing it all in one furious flash, was heard to cry, 'Lost by the cowardice of my Lord Grey!'

According to the Reverend Paschall the foot regiments now hurrying up in a single column—Wade with the Blue in the vanguard, followed by Matthews with the Red and Holmes with the Green—came, 'with a persuasion that the King's army was running. So Wade is said to have told his men they were; silence they would have broken, though commanded silence, and shouted had not he, doubting their circumstances restrained them. But when these foot were come to the ditch things were found to be otherwise than they hoped, *and they were commanded on pain of death not to go over.*¹ And this might easily put them into some confusion and consternation'.

This account is directly contradicted by Wade himself. 'By the time our Foot came up,' he says, 'we found our Horse all gone and the King's Foot in order. I advanced within 30 or 40 paces of the ditch being opposite to the Scotch battalion of the King's, as I learnt since, and there was forced to make a full stop to put the battalion in some order, the Duke having caused them to march so exceeding swift after he saw his horse run that they were all in confusion. By that time I had put them in some order and was preparing to pass the ditch (not intending to fire till I had advanced close to our enemies). Col. Matthews was come up and began to fire at distance upon which the battalion I commanded fired likewise and after that *I could not get them to advance.*'¹

It had only taken a few minutes from the first alarm for the Royalist Foot to turn out of their tents in good order, though it took considerably longer—over an hour—for the rest of their forces to get into action. Lord Feversham (probably not indispensable to the proceedings) had to dress himself with all the

¹ My italics.

difficulties of tying his cravat by the help of a paltry cottage mirror, the artillery was only got up with great difficulty, and chiefly through the energy of the Bishop of Winchester, who had once been a Bombardier, and the Horse were scattered. Meanwhile in the darkness Monmouth's Foot – or at least the first three regiments – deployed themselves along the rhine, roughly opposite the Scots and the 1st battalion of Guards. The three cannon came up in the gap between Holmes and Matthews 'and were very well plied and did great execution on Douglas and the 1st battalion of Guards which two indeed bore all the brunt of the rebell fire and lost many officers and soldiers and most of them by the cannon'.

The crucial question remains to be answered: why did they not cross the rhine? It *could* be crossed on foot, and at this stage an assault might have been pressed home with success. There is general agreement that all through the battle the Foot fought magnificently, 'as well as foot ever fought', yet for some unexplained reason, the obvious move – the passage of Bussex Rhine – was not made.

Oldmixon states – and in this he seems to be borne out by some remarks subsequently made to Bishop Kennet by a Royalist officer – that some at least *did* cross. 'Monmouth's men got over the Ditch with some difficulty, fell furiously on the King's forces, took two pieces of cannon and turned them on Dumbarton's and other Troops which put the latter into disorder.' However, if some such sortie was made, the numbers involved were not large enough to force an alteration in the general situation. We can only speculate over this unsolved riddle; perhaps that carefully built union between the peasantry and the small bourgeoisie broke on Bussex Rhine, and a whole decade of development collapsed in a critical moment of mutual distrust. The men may have felt a loss of confidence in their officers, or the officers lacked enthusiasm. Possibly a hint of this runs through Ferguson's story and is reflected in Wade's unconscious choice of *them* – 'I could not get *them* to advance' – instead of the pronoun of unity *we*. Perhaps. Against this theory stands the fact that during a month's strenuous campaigning no such flaws had revealed themselves, nor is there any reason to doubt the courage or integrity of men like Holmes or Matthews, Basset or Perrot. All of them were risking their lives

and all of them behaved both before and afterwards as old Ironsides are supposed to behave. Yet the fact remains: Bussex Rhine was not crossed.

By the time the Royalist Artillery came up and the Royalist Horse swept across the other pluncheon and down on to Monmouth's right in terrible charges, the line was breaking into confusion. 'Ammunition! For God's sake ammunition!' cried the Foot, but their wagons were bogged down in the rear, confused by their own Horse. Colonel Holmes, had had his arm blown off. Ferguson was cursing Grey: 'For I not only struck at several troopers who had forsaken their station, but upbraided divers of the captains being wanting in their duty; but I spoke with great warmth to my Lord Grey, and conjured him *to charge and not to suffer the victory which our foot had in a manner taken hold of to be ravished from us*. But instead of harking and complying with anything I said, he not only, as an unworthy man and a cowardly Poltrone, deserted that part of the field and forsook his command but rode with the utmost speed to the Duke, telling *him that all was lost and that it was more than time to shift for himself*.'

Monmouth, says Oldmixon, 'was then charging at the head of his Foot with his wonted Gallantry and the stand they made was very extraordinary and promising'. Paschall, who never concealed his prejudice against the Duke, accuses Monmouth of deserting his men and flying sooner than was compatible with honour, but this charge was never made by any single man who fought in the army, nor even by James II. On the contrary, it would seem, from the facts that his cloak was shot in two, and his hat, gauntlets and papers taken, that he must have stayed till the last possible moment.

'The Duke of Monmouth,' wrote Sir John Reresby, 'from the beginning of his desperate attempt had shown himself a great captain, inasmuch as the King himself said he had not made one false step.'

They were all brave men; and it was not till two of their regiments were cut to pieces, and their cannon put out of action, that the rest broke and fled. Monmouth, Buyse, Grey and a Dr Oliver, threw themselves on horses and reached Polden Hills as day broke. Wade, who 'perceived all the battalion on the left running . . . and finding my own men not inclinable to stand I caused

them to face about and made a kind of disorderly retreat to a ditch a great way behind us where we were charged by a party of horse and dragoon and routed, about one hundred and fifty getting over the ditch I marched with my own foot to Bridgewater'.

It was over. The battle was lost. That long struggle which had opened in such different circumstances forty-three years ago at Edgehill, was finished on Sedgemoor, on the morning of 6th July 1685. The Old Cause was lost, and the Leveller sea-green went down for ever into the mud of a Somersetshire ditch.

SIXTEEN

DIGGING THE GRAVE

I

‘THE RULE by which a prince ought, after a rebellion, to be guided in selecting rebels for punishment is perfectly obvious. The ringleaders, the men of rank, fortune and education, whose power and whose artifices have led the multitude into error, are the proper objects of severity. The deluded populace, when once the slaughter on the field of battle is over, can scarcely be treated too leniently. This rule, so evidently agreeable to justice and humanity, was not only not observed, it was inverted.’

So wrote Macaulay, surveying, from the impregnable upper story of the nineteenth century, an inexplicable scene of stupidity, perfidy and brutality. This is the Bloody Assize of legend, where the carmine hangings of death enshroud the West, and the frightful judge murders the innocent with more relish than he does the guilty. The error implicit in this Whig view – and it must be supposed that after the passage of a hundred and fifty years it was an innocent one – is revealed in the sentence beginning: ‘The ringleaders, the men of rank, fortune and education...’ These are presumed to lead the multitude, the deluded populace, or rather drive them as dogs drive sheep. However, this mistake was never made by the men living at the time, for it was not one they could afford; neither the commodious drawing-room floor of the eighteenth century, nor the airy turrets of the nineteenth had as yet been added to those grim foundations they were labouring through so much blood and dirt to make secure. The revealing fact about Jeffreys’ ‘campaign in the West’ is that it was approved by everyone save the victims. Four years later, when James II’s indomitable servant was dying in the Tower, he flung out the justification that was to float like bitter scum on the wreck of his splendid career: ‘Whatever I did then, I did by express orders;

and I have this further to say for myself, that I was not half bloody enough for him who sent me thither.'

Not half bloody enough: not only for the King and the Privy Council, but for the House of Commons, the House of Lords, for the Whigs as well as the Tories, the Church of England as well as the Roman Catholics. Not half bloody enough for the bench of Bishops, for the Prince of Orange and the noble Lords Halifax, Sunderland, Rochester, Clarendon, Godolphin, Churchill . . . for all those whom political success had yet to recall to the decency of merciful moderation. For the truth was that Jeffreys went on his errand not only with the consent, but with the active connivance of the whole of the Whig Party.

The facts being almost exactly the reverse of what Macaulay assumed, the 'ringleaders' being the multitude, and the few 'deluded' sheep the men of rank and fortune, the problem that faced King James and his ministers after the battle of Sedgemoor was one of considerable technical difficulty. Even in the twentieth century, with all the resources of modern science to hand, it has been demonstrated how surprisingly difficult it is, and what a comparatively long time it takes, to kill a large number of people, and in 1685 neither the means nor the organisation were in being.

Immediately after the battle, Colonel Kirke and his 'lambs', who had gained a certain amount of experience during their foreign service in Tangier, killed possibly a thousand people in one way and another. But there were very definite limits as to what one regiment of foot could accomplish and Colonel Kirke himself who had no particular powers, and was a sensible officer with a keen regard for his own interests, was not going to venture too far on his own initiative.

Judicial slaughter had hitherto been the English expedient for dispensing with the unwanted, and the manner in which the Crown had successfully disposed of individuals such as College, Armstrong, Russell and Sidney, now suggested to the Government that this practice be applied on a mass scale. That the laborious procedure of trial, conviction, and execution was an unsuitable method of killing large numbers of people, was evidently not fully realised, and in this sense, the Western Circuit was a real innovation,

demanding from its director a gift for original enterprise in excess of anything previously seen in the arena of justice.

Late that August, when the stains of autumn were tinging the West with red, the Chief Justice went forth in his own words: 'to hang more men than all the Judges of England since William the Conqueror'.

He went not only as Chief Justice of the King's Bench, but he held a special commission of Oyer and Terminer, giving him the absolute powers of a general in the field. He took with him three puisne judges – Levinson, Watkins and Wright – as well as the Lord Chief Baron Montague, and his coach was guarded by picked troops. With the possible exception of Jeffreys himself, whose talent was perhaps too flamboyant for the English taste, all of them were regarded as honest and honourable men – not only at the time, but for the remainder of their lives. This fact shows plainly the essentially artificial character of the later Whig indignation, which was directed from propaganda motives against certain political scapegoats, not against the act itself.

Justice arrived at Winchester on 27th August and after making a small preliminary example in the shape of Lady Lisle, proceeded to Dorchester where the work was really to begin. The solemn services of the Church of England before a congregation of the principal gentry set the atmosphere and underlined the full concurrence of spiritual and temporal lords in what was to be done. It is not known if Jeffreys still wore the 'bloodstone' given him by Charles II, but the news of a more magnificent gift, the Great Seal, was now despatched to him by Charles' younger brother. The brilliant figure of the Judge, still in his thirties, was soon to be transformed to that of the Lord Chancellor, and it was in this encouraging knowledge that he set about his almost impossible task. The gaols were full, the time at his disposal short, for what must be done, must be done quickly. Individual trials were out of the question and the lengthy procedure of the courtroom had to be cut to the minimum. Since only those who pleaded 'not guilty' were tried at all, threats were used to make as many as possible confess. Once condemned, they had to be executed, and the whole paraphernalia of the legal butchery was lengthy, difficult, and required a considerable number of tools and the individual attention of the

executioners. Here is a list, compiled by one of the sheriffs, of some of the things needing to be done or required for the execution of four men: 'erect gallows . . . provide halters to hang them with, a sufficient number of faggots to burne the bowells . . . and a furnace or cauldron to boyle their heads and quarters, and salt to boyle therewith, halfe a bushell to each traytor and tarr to tarr them with, and a sufficient number of speares and poles to fix and place their heads and quarters . . . owners of fower oxen to be ready with a dray and a wayne . . . a guard of fortie able men att the least'. All this, without mentioning the executioners; who with little or no previous experience were called upon in the summer heat to hang, cut up, boil and tar a fellow-man before an audience of his relatives and neighbours.

It has always been disputed how many suffered during the Western circuit, as judgement was only recorded in cases where there was a trial, and the gaol books were carelessly kept. However, the numbers are given in Richard Locke's *Western Rebellion*, one of the most reliable authorities, as 331 hanged, 850 transported, 408 fined, whipped and continued in prison. If the 1,000 killed by Kirke's soldiers after the battle are added, the total reaches 2,589; which is somewhere between a third and a half of Monmouth's entire army. Those who were hanged, were executed in batches from nineteen to three or four at the following places: Taunto. Dorchester, Lyme, Bridport, Shepton Mallet, Chard, Ilminster, Ivelchester, Frome, Phillips Norton, Pensford, Keynsham, Crewkerne, Bridgwater, Yeovil, Wells, Somerton, Bath, Redcliffe Hill, Axbridge, Wincanton, Minchad, Glastonbury, Bruton, South Petherton, Castle Cary, Langport, Nether Stowey, Stogumber, Dunster, Dulverton, Wiveliscombe, Wellington, Wrington, Chewton Mendip, Milbourne Port, Stogursey, Porlock, Cothelstone.

It can be seen that these places form a network over the area, and if it is remembered that all these executions took place within a month – the majority within the last fortnight of September – and that each victim was divided into four quarters and a head, it can be seen that the famous passage in *A New Martyrology* was not so much an elaborated or even symbolical picture, as a factual description: 'He [Jeffreys] made all the West an Aceldama: some places quite depopulated, and nothing to be seen in 'em but forsaken

walls, unlucky gibbets, and ghostly carcasses. The trees were loaded almost as thick with quarters as leaves: the houses and steeples covered as close with heads, as at other times frequently in that country with crows or ravens. Nothing could be liker hell than all those parts; nothing so like the devil as he. Caldrons hissing, carkasas boyling, pitch and tar sparkling and glowing, blood and limbs boyling, and tearing and mangling, and he the great director of all; and in a word discharging his place who sent him, the best deserving to the King's late chief justice there, and Chancellor after, of any man that breath'd since Cain or Judas.'

Judas is an exacting part, and it is not surprising that the Welshman, tortured by a painful illness, constantly needed to whip up his nervous energy by the excesses of style, which were afterwards so much deplored by those who had silently consented to his deeds. If only he had behaved like a gentleman! But Jeffreys, who had fought his way to the top of an extremely tough profession, who knew his law as well as anybody and could administer it fairly on non-political issues, had, at least, the courage of his own viciousness. How ridiculous, how hypocritical he must have felt it, for any to say in shocked voices that he had killed the innocent as well as the guilty. What could a man have to do with such trivial, technical distinctions, when he had come to carve up a whole area, to break the West and tar her quarters? To live there was to be guilty. So his coachman's whip came cutting down across the bare hands of a sister begging for her brother's life, or, in a passing jest, he made an offer of her lover's penis to a girl young enough to be his daughter, or glared from his scarlet and ermine on a child so that she 'pulled her hood over her face and fell to weeping and not many hours afterwards died through fear'. In all its details, his performance was unequalled in the long annals of English justice. Congreve could not have written better speeches than those he extemporised for himself, and we can see him, with his nose-gay making the air sweet before him, the handsome eyes ranging with brilliance over the terror-struck faces of the Bristol magistrates: 'Gentlemen, I am, by the mercy of God, come to this great and populous city. . . .'

This September would be burned like a brand into the memory of every survivor, not only for as long as they lived, but for as long

as their children and their children's children lived. In this way an extraordinary mass of detail was preserved; stories of actions and words which long outlived – and which still outlive – the knowledge of what it was the West had fought for.

The author of *A New Martyrology or the Bloody Assize*, published in 1696, made a large collection of the dying speeches and the last letters of the executed. From the confusion of these weeks glimpses are preserved, sometimes of such astonishing vividness, that we are there in the dust of a hot afternoon listening to the voices of men, who at the last, defeated the intention of their enemies, to destroy the meaning of their whole lives. We can hear Abraham Annesley, who followed Colonel Perrot to the scaffold at Taunton, say, 'I am come to pay a debt to Nature; 'tis a debt that all must pay, though some after one manner, and some after another. The way that I pay it may be thought by some few ignominious but not so by me; having long since, as a true Englishman, thought it my duty to venture my life in defence of the Protestant Religion, against Popery and Arbitrary Power: For this same purpose I came from my house to the Duke of Monmouth's army: at first I was a Lieutenant, and then a Captain, and I was in all the action the Foot was engaged in, which I do not repent. For had I a thousand lives they should all have been engaged in the same cause, although it has pleased the wise God (for reasons best known to himself) to blast our designs; but he will deliver his People by ways we know nor think not of.'

The consolatory phrases of religious belief still vibrate with that self-control necessary to men whose mistresses and wives are caught in an agony of suffering. 'My dearest love . . .' 'Dear, dear sister . . .' So many of them were at the age when the heart feels most, when it is most difficult to realise the imminence of violent death. The two fair, handsome Hewlings who, in a poignant phrase, 'were men too soon', died with a sweetness which surprised their enemies, and Nelthorp, that old campaigner in the service of the Lord, wrote from a London gaol to relatives of Lady Lisle, whose death he had unwittingly caused: 'For what I did was in the simplicity of my heart, without seeking any private advantage to myself; but thinking it my duty to hazard my life for the preservation of the Protestant Religion and English liberties.'

Holmes, Battiscombe, Samson Larke the preacher, William Cox who had been the first to enlist, Matthews and Tyler were executed at Lyme with six others on the 12th September. That day's long and difficult butchery on the Cob, where three months before the great campaign had opened, must have stirred thoughts and feelings very different from those intended by the conquerors, who hoped by a terrible example, to break the tough spirit of these men who had been among the Party's foremost leaders. 'Dear countrymen,' said Matthews to those who listened and would remember for ever, 'I suppose we are all of one kingdom and Nation, and I hope Protestants: O, I wonder we should be so cruel and Bloodthirsty one towards another; I have heard it said heretofore that England could never be ruined but by herself, which now I fear is a doing. Lord have mercy on poor England. . . .' And Tyler, who had read the Proclamation, now added a postscript: 'As to the matter of fact for which I die, it doth not much trouble me; knowing to myself the ends for which I engaged with the Duke of Monmouth were good and honourable.'

They had all played the man for their people and the cities of the Lord, and while the sea lay at peace about them, their bodies were tumbled against each other in death.

II

Meanwhile, in London the great world was disposing of the men of 'rank and fortune' according to their deserts, their usefulness and their capacity to pay. It was a long time since so much bargaining had been done so quickly.

The capture of Monmouth, Grey, Buyse and Wade, was a triumph which outshone the escape of Ferguson. Wade, after days of hiding, was captured, suitably enough, by a vicar of the Church of England, the rector of Brandon in Devon. He had been shot in the back by his captors and was taken to London seriously wounded. He would be kept as a witness. The fate of Lord Grey was also eminently in keeping with his life and character. As the historian Ralph says, 'He had been *given*, as the phrase then went to the Lord Rochester: and his estate being so entailed that no Forfeiture could prevent its descending to his Brother, his life was spared, that the Grantee might have the Benefit of the mean Profits.'

Within two months the ineffable survivor was dancing at a Court ball.

No more is heard of Buyse, so it is presumed that he too, in some way or other, managed to make his peace. Possibly Bentinck interested himself in his fate.

Nothing, of course, could save Monmouth, and the scaffold that had been waiting for him since his father's death was now erected on Tower Hill, and to it, between ranks of guards more numerous than any assembled round a scaffold since the execution of his grandfather, he went on the cloudy morning of 15th July.

The physical and mental collapse that had followed his capture was now no longer apparent, and the tall man in the grey coat with the long dark perwig, bore himself, even in the estimation of the uncle who signed his death warrant, 'as a downright enthusiast'. That grace which always distinguished him, the innate politeness of the heart which, perhaps more than his actual features, had made it seem 'that paradise was opened in his face', shone clearly in these last moments.

It has been long remembered how he spoke of Henrietta Wentworth, and before half London, claimed her as his love and his wife with a passion and dignity which have overshadowed the more prosaic, but possibly more interesting matter of his 'paper'.

The guardians of Monmouth's last hours on earth were three bishops, Ken, Hooper and Turner, and the Archbishop of Canterbury, Tenison. These four men, distinguished for their piety and sense of duty, were deeply concerned with the conversion of one who proved a most obstinate dissenter both in morals and faith. And it would not be doing the bishops any injustice to suppose that they were concerned, not only for Monmouth's immortal soul, but for the effect of his recalcitrance on temporal affairs.

Unfortunately for their best hopes, Monmouth, who had shown an ardent desire to preserve his life—provided it could be done without endangering others—came suddenly, on his last afternoon into a great composure. He was resolute, 'with a cast of enthusiasm'. He even sought to convert the Bishops, and put off all their admonitions and persuasions, sometimes with humour but always with firmness. As he told them, he had 'encouragement enough in himself'.

If we are right in thinking that during this last night he wrote a paper, putting down what he cared to say of his cause and meaning it to remain his testament, it is likely that he gave it, or a copy of it, to the Bishops. It is also likely that the one real friend he had with him, his servant Marshall who had been in the service of Tom Armstrong, also read it.

The evidence for the existence of this paper is strong, and it is probably owing to a mistake, either careless or deliberate, that it has been confused with the few formal lines which Monmouth signed on the morning of 15th July and which had undoubtedly been drawn up – possibly by others – to safeguard his Duchess and her children. 'I declare that the Title of King was force'd upon me, and that it was very much contrary to my opinion when I was Proclaimed. For the satisfaction of the World I do declare That the late King told me, He was never married to my Mother. Having declared this, I hope that the King, who is now, will not let my Children suffer on this account. And to this I put my hand this fifteenth day of July 1685. Monmouth.'

When he was on the scaffold with the Bishops and Sheriffs – and to some extent out of earshot of the crowds – 'He looked', according to the official account, 'for the Executioner, and seeing him, said, "Is this the man to do the business? Do your work well."

'Then the late Duke of Monmouth began to speak, some one or other of the Assistants, during the whole time, applying themselves to him.'

After his declaration about Lady Wentworth, he was urged to make a public acknowledgement of his crimes. He replied, 'What I have thought fit to say of Public affairs is in a Paper which I have signed, I refer to my Paper.'

To which either a Bishop or the Sheriff said, 'My Lord, there is nothing in that Paper about Resistance . . .' [the doctrine of Non-Resistance].

What I have thought fit to say of public affairs. But in the declaration he signed that morning, he had said nothing, a fact not overlooked by contemporaries. Chaloner Chute, who was present, wrote in a letter to the Countess of Rutland 'As for the innocent blood that has been shed, he said he was sorry for the occasion of sheading it, but as Mr Noel and I were told, he referred himself

as to that matter to his paper, but I cannot hear of any paper since that he delivered but only one wherein he disclaims all kind of right to the Crown in three or four lines under his own hande.'

A startling different version of what took place on the scaffold is given in a letter dated the 15th from Thomas Osborne, Viscount Latimer, written to his father, Lord Danby: 'He was near an hour on the scaffold before he was executed and gave an account of upon what motives he took up armes and stilled himself King and the fact was being invited by many of his friends to have settled the Protestant religion of which he dyed, and then to set up a commonwealth of which he was to be the protector, but after he was landed and found his party so strong, and that so many of the meaner sort of people came in, they told him he must draw in some of the better sort and he could never do it without have some appearance of protecting them and rewarding them and that he could not do without being King which a great many of the people even of the best quality had thought he had a right to, *and he knew he had*,¹ and so prevailed with him to take upon him the title.'

As we may presume that Lord Latimer had no motive for lying in a private letter to his father, the very interesting question arises: did he hear Monmouth say this with his own ears? Was he repeating something told him by an official on the scaffold, or by that phrase 'gave an account' did he possibly mean a written account?

It must be remembered that judging from Monmouth's frame of mind during his last hours, and from the replies which, according to the official account, he made to the Bishops, no statement he may have made on public affairs was likely to be considered satisfactory by James II. At this time the alarm of the Government was still very great and it would be assuming an almost incredible detachment on the part of the King to allow such a statement to be published or made known, and he would be able to count on the discretion of the Bishops to prevent this. It cannot be too much emphasised that neither at the time, nor afterwards, had anyone in public life the slightest interest in recalling anything Monmouth may have said or written. The Whigs as much as the Tories desired his memory to pass into permanent oblivion.

In *A New Martyrology* there is recorded 'An abstract of the

¹ My italics.

Duke of Monmouth's true speech' which is accepted by Oldmixon and, though Ralph rejects it as a fabrication by the remnants of the Party, he gives no reason for this view.

However, it remains a possibility that this Abstract and the 'account' of Lord Latimer's letter are drawn from a common source; either from an actual speech (which his servant Marshall would have heard and remembered) or from a paper he had written and which was later destroyed.

The Abstract is as follows:

I repent in general of all my sins, and more particularly concerned for what Blood hath been spilt on my account, and the rather seeing the issue is such as I fear will prove of fatal consequence to the Reformed Protestant Religion.

Instead of being counted Factious and Rebellious, the very opposing of Popery and arbitrary power, now arising and appearing plain enough, would sufficiently have protected my cause; besides several other most heinous and notorious crimes (such as the unhappy Fate of the Earl of Essex, and my Father of ever blessed memory, and others now covered over with Jesuitical Policy) should have been detected and revenged.

I have lived and shall now die in the Faith of this, that God will work a deliverance for his People, and then will be discovered the great, horrid and scarcely to be paralleled villanies our Enemies have been guilty of; but now you see my case is desperate yet know that I die a Martyr for the People, and shall rather pity the state that their false and covetous Minds have brought themselves and me to; then discover who are the Persons concerned in my overthrow and I heartily forgive all that have wronged me, even those that have been instrumental in my fall, earnestly praying for their Souls.

And I hope King James will show himself to be of his brother's Blood and extend his mercy to my children, even as he was wont to his greatest enemies, they being not capable to act, and therefore not conscious of any offense against his government.

Monmouth was not a better man than the others. He was not as clever as Ferguson or as steady as Tyler: he did not possess the unqualified integrity of Rumbold, nor perhaps the consistent

courage of many of the men in his army, but neither was he a mean man. From the influences of a terrible origin and a corrupt upbringing he had freed himself sufficiently to follow a purpose and a future which he recognised to be better than any to which he had been born. His last years had been good, his death was not ignoble, and so perhaps we may give him the benefit of the doubt, and believe that the last agonised cry of Henrietta Wentworth: 'O God had that poor man nothing to think of but of me?' was not justified. We may suppose that he did say, 'I die a Martyr for the People . . .' and in that firm belief closed his eyes on the England he had loved so well.

SEVENTEEN

EPITAPH

IN THE new palace at Hampton Court which Christopher Wren built for the sovereigns William III and Mary II, there is a closet, small enough for warmth, with a mirror fitted above the chimney-piece: it is a convenient mirror, because a languid watcher standing before the fire, could, without turning his head, see the long chain of inter-communicating rooms leading from the antechamber. Through the arches of fine wood he could watch the approaching figures grow larger and more brilliant with light and the departing ones recede to insignificance. And to one solitary watcher this mirror was alarmingly small for the brilliant galaxy of philosophers, statesmen, soldiers, bankers, pressing forward into the glow of the new century.

In 1701 the *Stadtholder* was alone in his English headquarters. His wife was dead and he himself, so the doctors said, had only a few months to live. He faced the future, but he stood in the past and the past was lonely and in a strange sense meaningless. Once, in his youth, when faced with a prospect he found intolerable, he had announced his determination to 'die in the last ditch' rather than to accept it. But life was much more subtle than he had supposed; it was ending now for him, not in the warm bed of his native earth, but in this English palace, this splendid achievement. This was the last ditch and he had come to die in it.

That sense of a vast and almost impersonal sadness, which haunts all that is recorded of William III's last years, is essentially the doom of a man who lacked creative imagination, who, in struggling successfully against the evils he knew, did not trouble to formulate the purpose of his life's efforts and work. The stoical fatalism of his remark to Burnet: 'I do not care what happens after I am dead,' might with equal truth be translated: 'I do not care what happens when I am successful.'

His success had been very great. From the stubborn, almost hopeless resistance to the French invasion, he had lived through twenty-five strenuous years to achieve a great European coalition which now had as its conscious objective the destruction of France's pre-eminent continental position. As far as this achievement could be the work of one individual, it was his. He had used countries, parties, religions, individuals as the planks of a delicate scaffolding on which he performed a supreme feat of balance. He understood men and bodies of men, as well as any statesman living or dead. He knew how to threaten and persuade, and above all he knew the point beyond which they would not go. So he had always in the main, contrived to get his way as against the way of Amsterdam or London, or any parliament or corporation living. But more and more this came to be the personal success of one man over other men: it was ephemeral, it solved and explained nothing. The great issues were untouched by it.

The chief event of the last decade, and one whose significance he never properly understood, was the creation of the Bank of England. Originally, the Bank had been a device for raising £1,200,000 in a crisis, and the formation by Act of Parliament of the private subscribers into a bank in 1694 had not, in William's eyes, endowed it with a peculiar status. He did not appreciate the fact that it was not simply a banking house—such as he had long been familiar with in Amsterdam—nor merely an expedient to raise money for the prosecution of the war, but the Bank; the repository of liquid capital, without which the war could not be fought at all; the accumulator of profit from the striking increase in home manufacture; the centre of the nation's changing economic life. Not appreciating the nature of this monopoly he had supported the Tories in their brief effort to form a rival Land Bank, just as in the field of foreign trade, he had supported the creation of the Darien Company as against the East India Company. The disaster that quickly befell both these ventures left him to some extent uncomprehending. He, the *Stadtholder*, who had the crown of England bundled up in his camp baggage, who directed the armies of many nations, and moved the pieces on the political field, was confronted in the Bank and the East India Company by the united power of the English Whigs; and it was a power against which he,

with all his experience and talent, could not move. They were the ruling class.

Messieurs d'Amsterdam, Messieurs de Londres: he had despised as well as disliked them. The manifestations of their way of life were repulsive to him, and forced, as he had been, to seek their support, he had never considered it as entitling them to a partnership. In his speech to the States in 1688 before leaving for his invasion of England he said: 'Against you, my lords, whom I now thank most heartily for the help which you have given me and the trust you place in me, I have often shown bitter anger. Then you would not see the dangers I pointed out and refused me the means which I thought necessary for avoiding them. Yet now we are at one. The danger no longer to be mistaken rises nearer and more threatening than ever and has brought us together and reconciled us.' This is the language of a man who believes he has won a moral victory and convinced his opponents of the truth and justice of his austere principles. He did not perceive it was in their *interest* to be convinced, that £400,000 was not a belated contribution to a cause, but an investment for profit.

Ce sera Nassau: moi, je maintiendrai. And he, their hired mercenary, had indeed maintained *Messieurs d'Amsterdam*, the City of London and the Whig party through several strenuous years; it was their faces which, bright with conscious power, crowded the future's mirror, while that of the architect of their victory was not reflected there. A sardonic man might reflect that he, in his way, was as extinct as his cousin Monmouth, whose bones mouldered forgotten under a flagstone in the little church in the Tower.

If he ever asked himself what had become of his Common Cause, what it had meant in actual terms of men's lives, he must have been at a loss to answer. He would have observed that there was plenty of money in England. Year by year it flowed in, through free and secret channels, filling the pockets of the gentlemen of England, circulating richly in the cities. On his rare visits to London he would notice that there were new decent houses being built and more prosperous, well-dressed persons, of the middle-class. Passion was fading from the political scene; the tensions of hatred, fear and love were sinking to a calm. Philosophers were considering that Nature

was good, Bishops were turning their minds from thorny questions of conscience to a rationalisation of temporal riches as products of Christian virtues. Rich men were good and poor men in error, and they were as certain of this as that their cambric sleeves were clean. Statesmen no longer troubled to play for each other's heads, but went on prosperously on even terms with all sides. Among all these people an immense growth in self-confidence was the preparation for the outward thrust to conquest.

The renewal of the war in Europe was now inevitable. Spain had fallen into the world's market and King Louis, bowing to his destiny, had recognised the late King James's son as King of England. The new war would be on an unprecedented scale, requiring troops, equipment and wealth such as had never been assembled before. And the English Parliament, which had once wrangled over sending six foot regiments to prevent the total destruction of the Protestant cause, was now preparing to foot the bill to the tune of £50,000,000. The drums were beating and Marlborough going to the war.

A strange reluctance to touch off this final conflagration was noticed in the dying King. It was as if those nerves of iron had become paralysed by some creeping apathy, an insentience of the will. He was not an imaginative man – for instance when a few years before he had seen the land of France for the first time, he had suffered a strange shock at its beauty and richness – but perhaps in these last months, when he thought of his lifelong enemy at Versailles, it was almost with sympathy. Both were, in a sense, victims of a process neither understood.

Possibly *le Roi Soleil* was tiring of the glorious prospects which surrounded him, for more and more, he tended to withdraw from the galleries of Versailles into those smaller rooms which, in his closing years, were to prove the last recess of that monstrous shell; the place where the inhabitant, forgotten by his creation, curls up to soften and die. Although in 1701 he was still some years distant from that terrible day when he was forced to admit that the country itself was in danger, it was noticeable that the silence of disillusionment was already creeping round the voices raised in adulation, while slightly above the level of the eyes, the statue population sat in undelivered judgment. Once their verdict had seemed gloriously

proclaimed, but their armour had grown tarnished with the passage of time, and the years cast dust into the garlanded laps.

Perhaps the first moment of real doubt as to the precise nature of his accomplishment, came to the Prince of Orange shortly after his landing in England in 1688. He 'wondered', both publicly in writing (and privately in thought), that the English people showed no stir at this deliverance. Peers came to him in increasing quantities, but the people of town and country did no more than look. And this was strange to him; surely he, with his well-equipped troops, his fine artillery, he, Orange, a sovereign, legitimate and Protestant prince, well financed and surrounded by experienced commanders, deserved the support which had been so misguidedly given to Monmouth. But his cold 'wondering' received a laconic reply from the citizens of Taunton: 'You are enough of yourselves to do the business.'

An answer such as this might be due to English lethargy, stupidity or even cowardice, but it was not a matter he had ever satisfactorily resolved. Nor, indeed, after those early days had it been an important one, though he had missed the stimulation and the bargaining power of popular support. However, he had manœuvred himself into his uncle's palace at Whitehall, he had coldly outwitted his hosts, who found they had 'engaged in the common cause under the Protection of the Prince of Orange' with more decision than they had suspected at the time, and now, thirteen years later, he was able to get what he wanted from the English: money and men in decisive quantities for the war against France.

This war must surely be their 'business', since it was the labour of Englishmen which was supplying the money, and Englishmen themselves who were being transformed in ever-increasing numbers by red coats and drill into 'Bulldogs'. Whether they liked it or not, the Bulldogs were in it, and somehow or other, they had got to 'come off'. They no longer had the power of choice.

There had always been rich men and poor men; those who worked and those who manipulated that work for profit, but in a decade, the disparity between them had grown so vast that the social relations of the country changed irrevocably. By the dawn of the eighteenth century it would have been fantastic to suppose

that a party of small freeholders, tenants and lesser tradesmen could seriously engage for political power. Buffcoate had not only vanished from political life; he was forgotten.

When a cause is lost in the only way it can really be lost; that is to say, when it becomes irrelevant to any existing circumstances – the fate of the individual engaged in it is never an easy one. To walk out of history by the back door and to continue to live is a sad task; to shrink to a fading patch of belief, to compromise, to deteriorate into an opportunist or harden into a fanatic – none of these are pleasant choices.

It would be idle to maintain that all the men who behaved so heroically in 1685 continued in heroism, or that many of them, deprived of that sustaining centre of belief by which they had lived, did not change by degrees from their former selves. Probably, had they been executed in '85, they would have died with words on their lips as noble as Annesley spoke; conversely, had the martyrs escaped they too might have lived to compromise with the disintegration of their beliefs. To die is simple: to come to terms with a life that has lost its purpose is neither simple nor easy.

Most of the middle-class survivors threw in their lot with Orange and whether from expediency or conviction accepted the reality of the Glorious Revolution. Hugh Speke, the son of old Speke, was fortunate to live to enjoy a peculiar revenge for his brother's hanging. During the last days of his reign, James II rashly took this man – liberated from prison at the price of £5,000 – into his confidence and desired to employ him in his affairs. Hugh Speke, who was in reality acting for the Prince of Orange, managed during the course of some years, to do the monarch as much harm as he possibly could, and as he was an able man this was not a little. His brother-in-law, Colonel Trenchard, that intrepid star-gazer, returned to England with the Prince of Orange and completed his career as one of the Secretaries of State. The Speke family were represented at Whitlackington by the son George, who seems to have been the only one of the family to have had Tory leanings. He had no son and when his daughter married the Earl of Guildford the history of the family passed, as was suitable, from the simplicity and grace of their old manor to a grander and more plutocratic setting. Edmund Prideaux, who suffered the apparently hopeless

fate of 'being given by the King to Jeffreys', managed to buy his life for £15,000 and lived out the remainder of his days in much reduced circumstances. Fletcher of Saltoun returned to his native Scotland and atoned for his killing of Dare by a consistent and vigorous struggle for those principles in which he had always believed. Colonel Ffoulkes took military employment under William, and happening on one occasion to come face to face with Colonel Kirke – also comfortably advanced in the same service – he told him his unqualified opinion of his conduct after Sedgemoor. The Colonel excused himself, but it is pleasant to reflect that Ffoulkes still had a heart which remembered. Aaron Smith was released from prison in '88 and became Solicitor to the Treasury, but the lawyer who had been so hot in the Country Party's service was never quite trusted by the new rulers and his career faded into disappointment. Lord Delamere, after a period in prison, had the satisfaction of being one of the peers chosen to ask King James to leave the palace of Whitehall; after which, he retired to his native Cheshire and to a life whose main events were finished.

Of those who compounded – who paid for their lives by 'doing a job' – it is surely unnecessary to say that Lord Grey came off best. William created him Earl of Tankerville in 1695, and soon after he was appointed First Lord of the Admiralty and Lord Privy Seal. He died in 1701, and was buried holding a Dutch clap pipe – possibly a symbolic acknowledgement of his last and most fruitful loyalty – perhaps a romantic touch which recalled him to the long vanished days in Amsterdam when he possessed comrades, even friends.

The case of Nathaniel Wade is psychologically even more interesting. All the way through, from his original joining of the Green Ribbon Club till the day he was shot in the back by his captors, Wade's career had been consistent in its ardent and selfless support of the cause. Of all the young men picked by Shaftesbury, he was not only one of the most able, but one of the best. Yet after his capture his life took such a different course that it might almost be supposed that Wade had died of that bullet and a changeling taken his place. His evidence was freely given against Delamere and his services in this respect must have been considered very

great, for King James pardoned him and caused him to be re-instated in his native city of Bristol, whose town clerk he became in 1687. There he lived for the rest of his life, growing in wealth and importance and on one historic occasion commanded the local militia with his old ability against a revolt of the Kingswood colliers. Wade the son of an old Ironside, Wade the descendant of a Lollard, Wade who had commanded the Blue at Sedgemoor, lived to be remembered in Bristol by a bridge called 'Traitor's Bridge', for here, on this glorious day, he was responsible for shooting down men who had been his comrades, who possibly had even guided his regiment across the Mendip Hills on that terrible Midsummer Day in 1685.

Compared with his, the subsequent career of Robert Ferguson, paradoxical though it may seem, is one of consistency. Ferguson made good his escape to Holland and during the next two years his indomitable buoyancy enabled him not only to pick up his life, but even to believe again in the future. He sailed with William at the head of a party of Nonconformists and after the change of sovereigns had been effected was given 'a place King Charles had just made for Thomas Killigrew, a keeper of a house, I think, for the custom office, where he had nothing to do but keep the rooms clean and set chairs for the commissioners when they meet, and for this he had £500 a year'.

Unfortunately, Ferguson was not a man who took the slightest interest in personal comfort or a steady income, and he quickly realised that not only he, but his ideas, were to be pensioned off. Nothing was now required of the English commons, whose pride he had so insistently proclaimed through the years, but to set chairs for their betters. The difficulty for Ferguson was, that he was honest; he could neither pretend nor compromise. He saw what was happening in Britain and he could not deceive himself that it was all for the best or even necessary to some future good. He observed not only the retention in office, but the increasing power and affluence, of a whole class of men, whom every event of the last twenty years had proved bitter enemies to English liberty. He watched with piercing contempt former Republicans and New Country Party men dig themselves comfortable little niches in this new world and justify their actions with terms like 'Protestantism'

and 'liberty', which it should have blistered their lips to utter, and finally he saw Englishmen dragooned to swell the vast armies on the Continent, their lives and the wealth produced by their labour, regarded with the coldest cynicism as 'expendable' in a war, which, having lost its early character of a struggle for national independence, had become purely aggressive. He saw all this and could not endure it.

Yet the fact remained that there was no popular party in England and no reasonable hope of creating one. The only alternative force in political life, the only group to which a rebel might attach himself with some prospect of disquieting the Government, was the party of the deposed James. Ferguson took the decision and became a Jacobite. Precisely what kind of Jacobite he was, it is difficult to determine. It is said that tears came into King James's eyes when he heard of this unexpected conversion, but then he was far away in St Germain, and Ferguson could impute to him what virtues and intentions he pleased, since it was unlikely he would ever have an opportunity for practising them. All the Plotter's Jacobite writings are primarily *against* the Whigs and for that old English liberty which he now presumes would be restored by James. The proof that this prospect of a Stuart restoration is essentially Utopian, is that he does not relate it to any of the events of the past. Nowhere, for instance, does he abjure his New Country Party days – nor is it likely that he was conscious of an inconsistency in casting for the Uncle, the role which had been played by the Nephew. Fortunately Ferguson was never called upon to take part in the realisation of this scheme – we may suppose that his apostasy to Whiggism would have been rapid – and so he was able for the rest of his life to write biting and acute exposures of Whig government under the flag of Jacobitism.

In some respects a curious similarity may be discerned between Ferguson and his great contemporary, Swift. Both detested what they saw, both refused all compromise, and both came to attach to a party, which in reality cared as little for the things they believed in, as did the Whigs, virtues and intentions it never possessed. But Ferguson's life had always been based in family affection and the comradeship of ordinary people; he had not only written, but had fought, not merely suffered disillusion and seen

suffering, but taken part in a great living enterprise to redeem his England. He had loved as well as hated. And in the end this difference prevented his life from turning down the paths of madness or mysticism, but reduced it rather to a quietness which was, perhaps, not without a feeling of eventual hope. In 1713 it is reported that: 'he is yet alive, in great want, and upwards of ninety years, and hath nothing but what he begs'. But poverty was nothing new, he had the company of young nephews and nieces and until the last year or two, the companionship of his faithful Hannah. The life of this man, so seemingly wretched in its constant failure to achieve the ends for which he worked, so deprived of all the things usually considered pleasurable, was in fact immeasurably rich. To make acquaintance with Ferguson at the distance of three hundred years, is to be pierced by the fire of his ardent spirit; to say otherwise is, in his own words, 'to frustrate the great end of languages and speech, and to quarrel with the Rules of good sense'. Better to 'ascribe Mildness to Tyrants, Honesty to Robbers or Truth to Lyars' than poverty to him, who with his puff of precarious breath, managed to blow such a long and steady blast on the trumpet of liberty.

Of those on what might be termed 'the other side', Major Wildman, having successfully preserved his famous quarters intact for nearly half a century, now contemplated retiring from active business, on the principle that the state of the nation could scarcely be bettered. He accepted the Postmastership, in which he continued with increasing affluence till some misunderstanding with Queen Mary over a delay in her husband's letters caused him to be relieved of this interesting and lucrative place. Still, he had had the satisfaction of seeing most of the things he believed in come to pass, and if these were not precisely what he had allowed others to presume they were, that was not his fault. The Major was a sharp man; he had run fortunes with destiny and come off on pretty even terms; few could boast as much.

The subsequent careers of Sunderland, Shrewsbury, Nottingham, Godolphin, Marlborough, are too illustrious to need further embellishment. Like marble scrolls and garlands climbing to a glorious heaven, they held the Whig trophy above all rivals, a lesson and a monument to the age. If there were those sufficiently ill-natured

to spy some ugly quarterings on that fair shield, prudence suggested that they hold their tongues. As the Earl of Chesterfield afterwards remarked, 'No one ever said a pert thing to the Duke of Marlborough'.

This Earl was the grandson of that old Roman, the great Marquess of Halifax, who departed from this life in 1695. William had not proved quite the king for him, nor he quite the navigator for the unchartered waters of the new age. Gradually he fell out of favour and with this decline in power went many of the romantic pretences which had graced his nature and his correspondence. He ceased to take an interest in his 'adored' Rufford, the house and gardens began to fall into decay, and during his last years he could never be persuaded to pay it a visit. With this relinquishment came an added sharpness and insight into the problems that really concerned him and in his 'Rough Draft of a New Model at Sea' he laid down with a clarity never surpassed that strategy of the balance of privilege with ability by which his class were to maintain their power unbroken for the next two hundred years.

A rival of the great Trimmer might have found it ironic that it was not till the evening of his life that he was called upon to fight the vital battle of his career. Neither the defeat of the Exclusion Bill nor the substitution of William for James had been as important to him as this final contest with fate for the perpetuation of his family through his heirs male. Of his three sons, two had not turned out well: the eldest, out of some inexplicable rebellion against his father, killed himself with drink and the pox, the youngest was 'cowed' and went to die quietly in a foreign war. There remained the middle one: William, Lord Eland. Lady Eland had so far only borne a girl; worse, she was delicate, and from 1690 to 1694 the Marquess was kept in perpetual suspense. If only she would recover and have a son — or die and make room for another! Finally, late in 1694, she died, and within a few weeks her father-in-law was choosing her successor, despite the sighs of the unhappy Eland, who had sincerely loved his wife. Unfortunately, Queen Mary had also died that winter, and the arrangements for her funeral most inconveniently delayed the propagation of his heir. When the wedding finally took place, Halifax was on his deathbed. Should Lord Eland be summoned? He waved away the suggestion. Not

till the marriage was consummated and his grandson conceived did he care to look on his son's face. So died this brilliant and admirable man, whose wit and parts were the ornament of his age. Neither philosophy nor love, government nor war, intruded upon his last hours, so occupied were they by anxiety for the only thing in which he really believed: the perpetuation of the great acquisitive family, whose power and wealth he had done so much to consolidate. Few men had been less incompetent than he, and his final defeat must be ascribed to that malicious fate, whose sex and manners were clearly revealed in the capricious breath which flattened a Marquisate as if it were a house of cards.

The grandson was never born, and the Saville estates passed away into the female line. The only one of his descendants to inherit anything of his parts was, ironically enough, the son of his rebellious and unsatisfactory daughter, but even this was only a transitory flash before extinction. The celebrated Earl of Chesterfield left no legitimate heir and possibly his inheritance of wit was cast in a more diminutive mould, for George II called him 'a little tea-table scoundrel', a description which, we may be tolerably sure, William III would never have applied to the grandsire who had borne himself through all the vicissitudes of knavery with the majestic grace of an English philosopher.

The Savilles were not the only family to die in their main branches. Lady Wentworth returned to England in the autumn after Monmouth's execution. It is probable that she no longer had the heart to fight against the long illness which had been undermining her strength for the last two years, and in the following spring she died. She left no heir and the ancient barony passed into her aunt's family, along with the magnificent mansion of Toddington. It would appear that no one cared to live there and its Elizabethan splendours slowly rotted through a score of winters till most of it was pulled down in 1745. The rooms that Monmouth had used were kept locked for over fifty years, till through the dilapidated ceiling of the room beneath, could be seen the great tarnished bed with its plumes and hangings where he and Henrietta had lain in each other's arms through those summer nights so long ago.

One by one, as the century advanced, all the people concerned

in these events died, and everything they had done suffered the slow transformation of time. The process of history was changing the scene of these actions; with the increasing competition of cheaper woollen cloth from other parts of the country and especially the increasing wealth derived from other manufactures and industries, the peculiar power of the West inevitably declined. From being the most highly developed part of the country, it gradually sank into second and third place. This stagnation was not without its gift of bitter suffering and by the early nineteenth century her population showed a striking decline. Men could no longer support themselves from her shrinking industries and the living to be got from agriculture was not great.

So her power passed to others, and with it went the revolutionary role which had once been played so nobly by her yeomen and labourers, her citizens and gentlemen. Their descendants remembered – but they remembered differently. Though the memories remained ineradicable as old stains of sorrow, they were hidden, and even in time became touched with shame. Political reaction, which is one of the ugliest diseases of economic decline, spread through towns and villages and the respectable did not care to enquire too closely into their ancestors' beliefs. What they could not forget was the suffering and terror inflicted upon them by the defeat, though it is significant that many of the stories preserved, and most often repeated, are those of the *innocent*, that is to say, non-political sufferer. The senseless brutality of the maniac Jeffreys is the necessary obverse of the saintly Lady Lisle. So the subtle falsification spread: Anglican became synonymous with 'Protestant', poor peasants with the Army, the proclaiming of Monmouth with the end and purpose of the struggle.

Yet this picture of eclipse is not final, the tragedy not complete. Those fundamental principles for which the Army fought were in the future to be taken up by others, and in changed circumstances to be developed and applied with a greater possibility of success. Without adopting the Panglossian belief that all is for the best in the best of all possible worlds, we may see clearly that no revolutionary struggle is entirely in vain, no cause as good as the Old Cause finally lost. And the men who gave their lives, and lived them too in the sixteen-eighties, are worth remembering. On a June day

in Edinburgh, in 1685, that good and gallant man, Colonel Richard Rumbold, stands alone upon 'a scaffold before a high gibbet erected above the Cross towards the West'. And in those few moments before the executioner cut out his living heart and threw it 'with disdain into the fire', we can hear his voice speaking to the future: the voice of a man who has served his generation and in that service found faith. 'I die this day in the defence of the ancient laws and liberties of these nations; and though God for reasons best known to himself hath not seen fit to honour us, as to make us the instruments for the deliverance of his people, yet as I have lived so I die in the faith, that he will speedily arise for the deliverance of his church and people. And I desire all of you to prepare for this with speed. I may say This is a deluded generation, veiled with ignorance, that though popery and slavery be riding in upon them do not perceive it; though I am sure there was no man marked of God above another; for none comes into the world with a saddle on his back, neither any booted and spurred to ride him.'

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IRIS MORLEY'S death prevented her from providing this book with a bibliography or with the full documentation she had intended to give it. This latter it is quite impossible for anyone else to attempt: the former I have attempted to compile with the aid of her rough notes and the recollection of many discussions with her during the progress of her work. I am only too aware of the inadequacies which must exist and the gaps which she would certainly have filled. It is offered, with all its defects for which I am solely responsible, as a poor substitute which may help the reader to follow up the main threads of the story, but should not be taken as at all representing the vast amount of work which Iris Morley put into the preparation of her book.

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